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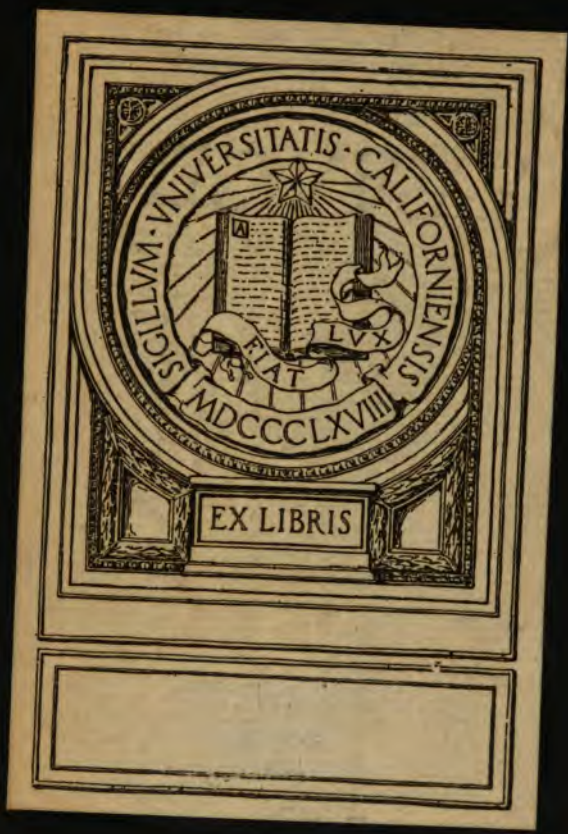
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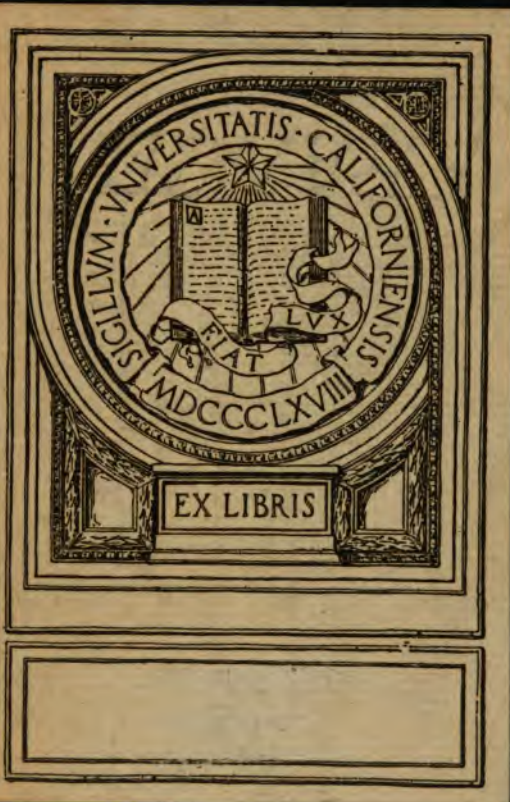
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S. R. Crockett

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with best wishes from

J. C. Turner

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27th Aug. 1907.

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GUSTAVUS III

AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

1746-1792

AN OVERLOOKED CHAPTER OF
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY HISTORY

By R. NISBET BAIN

FROM ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

"Gustavus of Sweden, a shining sort of man."—CARLYLE

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.



LONDON

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER, & CO. L^{TD}

PATERNOSTER HOUSE, CHARING CROSS ROAD

1894

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HISTORY I

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INTRODUCTION

BOTH his character and his circumstances made Gustavus III. of Sweden one of the most interesting and extraordinary personages of his day. The political knight-errant, whose restless spirit was such a disturbing element in Continental politics ; the social reformer, who changed the customs and almost the character of his people ; the adventurous statesman, who won his fame by one revolution only to lose his life by another ; the born orator, who was always and everywhere irresistible ; the polished writer, who founded the Swedish Academy and created the Swedish drama—few monarchs, nay, few men, have had so many and such various titles to renown as he. Add, too, that his career has all the piquant unexpectedness of a romance. From his very boyhood, when a mischievous and meddling Parliament intervened between him and his parents, to the midnight masquerade when the assassin's bullet struck him down in his prime at the Opera House, which he himself had dedicated to the National Muses, his whole life abounds with strange vicissitudes and dramatic incidents. Finally, he is the last of the great Swedish princes, who belong rather to Europe than to Sweden. His influence extended far beyond the limits of his native land ; he was intimately acquainted with most of his famous contemporaries, and he left his mark on all the great political events of his day.

Such a man is a tempting subject for a historian, and the literature at the disposal of his biographer is voluminous indeed; yet peculiar circumstances make the task by no means a light one. The essentially twilight shape of "the last of the Vasas" can only be viewed through the distorting medium of the most bitter political controversy. Gustavus III. was at once the ideal of an unreasoning admiration which "sang the king as something more than man," and the victim of a fanatical hatred which pursued him even beyond the grave. For at least half a century after his death, no Swedish historian could be trusted to do him justice. A foreigner, perhaps, is more likely to succeed. At all events, he approaches the subject without bias. To him Gustavus is neither the incarnation of crafty despotism, nor yet the paragon of princes; neither a Tiberius nor a Trajan. He is simply what Carlyle has so happily called him: "A *shining* sort of man."

I will now briefly set out the sources of the subject.

Beginning with original documents, there are, first, the large collection of letters, despatches, &c., so masterly edited by the great historian Geijer (*Konung Gustaf III.'s efterlemnaded papper*), which must be supplemented by the King's own correspondence in Swedish and French, contained in the three last volumes of his collected works, and the smaller collection of his private letters to Count Armfelt, edited by Olof Tegner. Next come the numerous contemporary Swedish memoirs and diaries, all more or less partial one way or other, and of very varying importance. Chief of all are the voluminous historical recollections of the elder Count Fersen (*Historiska Skrifter*), extending over more

than fifty years, and dealing with events in which the writer took a leading part. Then come the *Anteckningar* of Schröderheim, the Swedish Saint-Simon, and the King's one indispensable friend; the *Anteckningar* of Adlerbeth, also a warm admirer of Gustavus; the *Mémoires* of Count Toll; the *Anteckningar* of the great Finance Minister Liljencrantz; the *Minnen och Anteckningar* of Lars von Engeström, the Swedish Minister at Warsaw, which cast much light on the obscure diplomacy of Russia, Prussia, and Austria; the *Historiska Anteckningar* of the regicide Johan von Engeström; the *Dagboksanteckningar* of G. J. Ehrensvärd, which give such vivid pictures of Gustavus's Court; the *Minnen och Bref* of Bishop Wallqvist, the energetic prelate on whom the King leaned after his rupture with the nobility; Count Tessin's *Dagbok*, *Tessin och Tessineana*, and "Letters to a Young Prince," which tell us much of Gustavus's boyhood; A. Ahnfelt's *Ur svenska hofvets . . . lif*, mostly gossip with a grain of hard historical truth here and there.

Of non-Swedish original documents, the most important are the diaries and correspondence of the younger Fersen, edited by Klinckowström; the *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes*; Broglie, *Le Secret du Roi*, vol. ii.; *Correspondance secrète inédite de Louis XV.*, ed. Boutaric; *Correspondance secrète entre Marie Thérèse et le Cte. de Mercy Argenteau*; Gorani, *Mémoires secrètes*; Feuillet de Conches, *Louis XVI., Marie Antoinette et Mme. Elisabeth*; Grimm, *Correspondance littéraire*; *Mémoires du Comte de Stedingk*; Staël, *Correspondance diplomatique*; Tourzel, *Mémoires*; Bouillé, *Mémoires*; Raumer, *Beiträge zur neuen Geschichte*;

Arneth, *Marie Antoinette, Josef II. und Leopold II., Briefwechsel ; Correspondance du Marquis . . . de Raigecourt* . . . ed. La Rocheterie ; Arneth, *Josef II. und Leopold von Toscana* ; Khrapovitsky, *Dnevnik*, — Khrapovitsky was Catherine II.'s private secretary, and his diary (written in semi-stenographic Russian unfortunately) is, without exception, the most exact and reliable record of the great Tsarina extant ; tomes 13, 19, and 23 of the *Sbornik* of the Imperial Russian Historical Society, containing precious despatches, &c. ; *Materialyui dlya zhizneopisaniya N. P. Panina*, ed. Brikner ; "Correspondence of Sydney Smith," ed. Barrow, supplemented by the Brit. Mus. MS. Add. 28066, containing details not to be found in Barrow ; "Bland-Burgess Papers ;" Miles "Correspondence," and the "Eliot Memoirs," ed. Minto. Sydney Smith and Hugh Eliot, by the way, rendered signal services to Gustavus at a critical period of his life.

Finally, there are many valuable monographs and other original works dealing with parts of the subject, of which the Swedish ones naturally come first in number and importance. Foremost, as far as it goes, I would place Professor Odhner's excellent *Sveriges politiska historia under Gustaf III.'s Regering* ; Olof Tegner's charming life of the royal favourite Armfelt ; Geijer's *Teckning af Frihetstiden*, and Thamm's conscientious and invaluable abstract of the voluminous protocols of the stormy Riksdag of 1789. Many of the well-known historical essays of the Swedish Academy, moreover, deal with Gustavan personages, and therefore indirectly with Gustavus himself, and of these I may mention Wirsén's *Minne af Grefve J. G. Oxenstjerna* ;

Böttiger, *Minne af J. H. Kellgren* ; Beskow, *Minne af K. Gjörwell* ; the same author's *Minne af K. G. Tessin*, one of the most fascinating of his minor works ; and Odhner, *Minne af Graf U. Scheffer*. I have also got many instructive details from the following books, some of which are but little known : *Svenska Kröningar* ; *Svenska Hofclereciets historia* ; *Bidrag till Kännedom om Sveriges yttre politik närmast efter Statsvälförning 1772*, and *Blad ur Konung Gustaf III.'s . . . giftermals historia*, both by Silfverstolpe ; Tengberg, *Sverige under Partihvalvet* ; Cedercrutz, *Sverige under Ulrika Eleonora och Fredrik* ; Chydenius, *Politiska Skrifter* ; Backström, *Svenska Flottan's historia* ; Sundelius, *Svedenborgianismens historia i Sverige* ; Schartau, *Hemliga handlingar* ; Crusenstolpe, *Historiska personligheter* ; Hjelt, *Sveriges Ställning till Utlandet närmast efter 1772 års statshöfning* ; Tigerstedt, *Göran Magnus Sprengtporten* ; Mankell, *Anteckningar rörande Finska Arméens . . . Krigshistoria* ; and finally, Akeson's *Gustaf III.'s Förhållanden till Franska Revolutionen*, an invaluable little book for its special period, being, for the most part, an abstract of diplomatic documents in the Swedish archives.

Of monographs not Swedish the following have also been useful to me : C. F. Sheridan, "A History of the late Revolution in Sweden," London, 1778 ; Geffroy, *Gustave III. et la Cour de France*, a good book, but somewhat antiquated now ; Beaumont Vassy, *Les Suedois depuis Charles XII.* ; Windrinsky, *Kaiser Josef II.* ; Novaes, *Elementi della storia de' sommi pontefici* ; Bimbinet, *Relation fidèle de la fuite du Roi Louis XVI.* ; Pallain, *Le Mémoire de Talleyrand* ; Grot, *Ekaterina II. i Gustav III.* ; Orduin, *Pokorenja Fin-*

landya ; Solovev's monumental *Istoria Rossy*, vol. xxviii. ; the same author's *Otpadenya Polski* ; and Waliszewski, *Le Roman d'un Imperatrice, Catherine II*.

For the appendix chapter, on the Literature, I am mainly indebted to the following Swedish works : Malmström, *Samlade skrifter* ; Gyllenborg, *Mitt lefverne* ; Warburg, *Det svenska lustspelet under Frihetstiden* ; Warburg, *Svenska Litteratur historia* ; Friedlander, *Gustaf III. som dramatiska författare* ; Dahlgren, *Anteckningar om Stockholms teatrar* ; E. Tegner, *Samlade skrifter* ; Atterbom, *Svenska Siare och Skalder* ; Dalin, *Den Svenska Argus* ; Kellgren, *Samlade skrifter* ; Creutz, *Vitterhets Arbeten* ; Ehrenström, *Notice biographique sur Monsieur de Leopold*.

Finally, a word of warning as to two well-known works which have been too long regarded as standard authorities on Gustavus III. I allude of course to Fryxell's *Berättelser ur Svenska historien*, and Schinkel's *Minnen ur Sveriges nyare historia*, the former the work of a political, the latter the work of a dynastic partisan. If read at all, their effect should be neutralised by the perusal of Beskow's eloquent and chivalrous apology—*Gustaf III. som Konung och Menniska*.

R. NISBET BAIN.

BRITISH MUSEUM.

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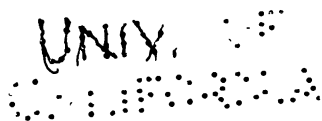
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GUSTAVUS III.

AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

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Death of Charles XII.—Ulrica Leonora — Frederick — Political revolution in Sweden—The Riksdag or Diet—Its constitution and character—The Secret Committee—The Raad or Senate—The Horn Administration—Rise of the Hat and Cap factions—The Hats oust Horn — Their martial policy — Disastrous war with Russia — Peace of Abo — Readjustment of the Swedish succession.

ON Sunday afternoon, November 30, 1718, while Charles XII. was watching his soldiers at work in the trenches before Fredrikshald, in Norway, a shot from the fortress pierced his temples, killing him on the spot. The Lion of the North was only in his thirty-sixth year when death overtook him. Eighteen of the twenty-one years of his reign had been spent in warfare. His death was a befitting conclusion to a career which had been little more than a long campaign.

But the fatal bullet did more than cut off a hero in mid-career. Autocracy in Sweden received its death-blow with Charles XII. The old system of government collapsed. The nation swung round from one extreme to the other. It had suffered much from the despotism of monarchy ; it was to suffer still more from the anarchy of license. The

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first victim of the new order of things was Charles's "grand-vizier," Baron Görtz, whose inexhaustible resources had, during the last three terrible years, upheld both at home and abroad the sinking empire of his indomitable master. As an alien, Görtz had lightly regarded the intense sufferings of the nation, but he was the mere tool of a will stronger than his own, and his worst fault was that he had served his king too well. When the royal ægis was at length withdrawn, the unpopular Minister perished on the block, after a trial which was a parody of justice.

But it was not so much his actions as his dynastic sympathies which brought Görtz to the block. The new Queen (for the Princess Ulrica Leonora, with indecent haste, had caused herself to be proclaimed in the capital) was Görtz's most implacable enemy. The sudden death of a brother whom she had had little cause to love had afforded this Princess an opportunity of avenging the wrongs of a lifetime. From her infancy she had been set aside in favour of an older and more gifted sister, and that sister's son, Charles Frederick, Duke of Holstein, a youth of eighteen, was, on his uncle's death, the nearest heir to the throne. There can be little doubt that Charles XII. had intended this nephew to be his successor, and it was part of Görtz's political system to dissipate the coalition against Sweden by contracting a marriage between Charles Frederick and a daughter of Peter the Great. But Görtz's execution left the Holstein party without a head; Ulrica had already purchased the adhesion of the army by ostentatiously renouncing absolutism, and the Riksdag or Diet, which, after an interval of more than twenty years, assembled at Stockholm in January 1719, seemed disposed to shut the door for ever upon the rightful heir.

The first act of the Estates was to declare the throne vacant; their second was to *elect* Ulrica Leonora, Queen,

but not till she had consented to abide by the new Constitution, which changed Sweden from the most absolute into the most limited of monarchies. Ulrica had desired that her husband, Prince Frederick of Hesse, should share the crown with her. This request the Estates at first refused, but less than twelve months' experience of the Queen convinced them of the necessity of a compromise. There was, indeed, no room in a constitutional monarchy for a sovereign who dismissed three Prime Ministers in as many months for protesting against her violation of the very Constitution of which she was the sworn guardian. Besides, the Estates justly felt that they would have far less difficulty in dealing with a foreign princelet, who enjoyed the revenues of the crown on good behaviour, than with an imperious Princess who, with all her faults, was still the sister of the idolised Charles XII. Accordingly, early in 1720, Ulrica was permitted to abdicate in favour of her husband, the Prince of Hesse, who was elected King under the title of Frederick I.

But the choice of the new sovereign, if highly profitable to the Swedish Diet, was fatally injurious to the Swedish Empire. Supported though he was by a large parliamentary majority, Frederick felt by no means secure upon his throne so long as the young Duke of Holstein was alive. The nation, as a whole, was sincerely attached to the last surviving grandchild of Charles XI.; even in the Legislature he had a large and influential following, and, more alarming than all, the Foreign Powers, who were still at war with Sweden, and bent upon rounding off their domains out of the scattered débris of her continental possessions, also seemed disposed to favour the pretender. To satisfy their rapacity by offering them more than the most they could expect from the Duke of Holstein became, therefore, the first object of the new King and his Ministers, and, in an

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evil hour for Sweden, they resolved to accept the proffered mediation of England, as the first step towards a general peace.

And indeed peace at almost any price was necessary to the very existence of Sweden. A twenty years' war against the banded might of Europe had broken at last her martial spirit, exhausted her resources, and left her at the mercy of a merciless coalition. She had not even the opportunity of playing off her numerous enemies one against the other. To have come to terms, first of all, with the Tsar, her nearest and most dangerous foe, would have been her soundest policy; but the resolution of the new Ministry left Sweden a mere instrument in the hands of the English negotiators. Hanover had long been fishing in the troubled waters of Northern politics for Bremen and Verden, and now she saw her way to getting them for next to nothing. The Swedish Government bitterly complained, after the event, that the King of England obtained more under the cloak of friendship than the other Powers by force of arms. By the Treaties of Stockholm, 20th February 1719 and 1st February 1720, Hanover obtained Bremen and Verden for herself, and the larger and better portion of Pomerania for her confederate Prussia. The prospect of coercing Russia by means of the English fleet had alone induced Sweden to consent to such sacrifices; but when the last demands of England and her allies had been satisfied, George I. repudiated his obligations and left Sweden to make what terms she could with the Tsar. In her utter isolation she had no choice but to surrender unconditionally, and by the Peace of Nystad, 30th August 1721, ceded to Russia the bulk of her Baltic possessions, and with them the hegemony of the North.

It was not the least of Sweden's misfortunes that the Constitution which was to be the compensation for all her

past sacrifices should contain within it the elements of most of her future calamities. Violently anti-monarchical as it was, the Constitution was anything but democratic. Theoretically, indeed, all power was vested in the people as represented by the Riksdag or Diet, consisting of four distinct Orders or Estates, nobles, priests, burgesses, and peasants, sitting and deliberating apart, and thus practically consisting of four distinct and separate Parliaments. The conflicting interests and mutual jealousies of these four independent orders made the work of legislation exceptionally difficult. It is true that no measure could become law till it had obtained the assent of three at least of the four Estates, but this provision, which seems to have been designed to protect the lower orders against the nobility, produced far greater ills than the evils it professed to cure. Thus, measures might be passed by a bare majority in three Estates when a real and substantial majority of all four Estates in congress might be actually against it. Or, again, a dominant faction in any three of the Estates might enact laws highly detrimental to the interests of the remaining Estate, a danger the more to be apprehended as in no other country in Europe were class distinctions so sharply defined as in Sweden.

The Swedish nobility was certainly the poorest and perhaps the proudest in the world. It possessed the usual aristocratic privileges, of which freedom from taxation and the exclusive right to the higher offices of State were the chief. The head of each noble family had the right to sit in the Upper House, but most of these hereditary legislators, too needy to reside in the capital during the session of the Riksdag, derived a considerable income from the sale of their *fullmakts* or proxies to the highest bidder.

The invidious and untranslatable epithet *ofrälse*¹ sharply

¹ *Ofrälse* is the negative of *frälse*, which means redeemed, exempted.

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distinguished the three lower Estates from the dominant and privileged class. Of these the clergy stood first in rank and reputation.

The Order of clergy deservedly enjoyed a political influence out of all proportion to its limited numbers, for it was by far the best educated and the least servile body in the kingdom. Yet the hard-worked Swedish hierarchy was so ill-paid, that the poorest gentleman rarely thought of the Church as a profession. The Bishops too, were not lords spiritual, as in England, but simply the first among equals in their own Estate.

The burgesses, again, were burgesses in the most literal acceptance of the word, merchants and traders, with the exclusive right of representing in the Diet the boroughs where they traded. But this right, whilst manifestly adding to the political importance of the order of burgesses, naturally accentuated the distinction between gentlemen and commoners.

The peasantry also could only be represented in the Diet by peasants. It may seem absurd that an ignorant peasantry (and what ignorance so ignorant as theirs?) should form an integral part of the National Legislature; but, in the first place, the Swedish peasantry, though rough and rude, was singularly shrewd and intelligent; and, in the second place, the general practice of excluding the members of this Order from most of the special committees in which the chief business of the session was done, minimised their power of doing mischief.

Each Estate was ruled by its *talman* or speaker, who was elected at the beginning of each Diet. The speaker of the House of Nobles, called the land-marshal, or marshal of the Diet, was always chairman when the Estates met in congress, and also presided, by virtue of his office, in the celebrated Secret Committee.

This famous body, which consisted of 50 nobles, 25 priests, and 25 burgesses, practically possessed, during the session of the Diet, not only the supreme executive, but also the supreme judicial and legislative functions. It prepared all bills for the Riksdag, created and deposed all Ministries, controlled the foreign policy of the nation, and claimed, and often exercised, the right of superseding the ordinary courts of justice. During the parliamentary recess, however, the executive remained in the hands of the Raad or Senate, an august and venerable council of magnates, with a history conterminous with the history of Sweden, and which now exchanged its old dependence on the will of an absolute monarch for a new dependence on the caprices of a sovereign Riksdag.

It will be obvious that there was no room in this republican Constitution for a constitutional monarch in the modern sense of the word. The crowned puppet who possessed a casting-vote in the Raad, of which he was the nominal president, and who was allowed to create peers once¹ in his lifetime, was rather a state decoration than a king.

At first this cumbrous and complicated machinery of government worked tolerably well under the firm but cautious control of Chancellor Count Arvid Bernhard Horn, the last great statesman of the old school, who, in his younger days, had been 'conspicuous among the little band of heroes which surrounded the heroic Charles XII. Under his prudent and pacific administration, the work of restoration proceeded rapidly. In his anxiety to avoid embroiling his country abroad, Horn reversed the traditional foreign policy of Sweden by keeping France at a distance and drawing near to England, for whose liberal institutions he always professed the highest admiration. Thus a twenty years' war was succeeded by a twenty years' peace, during which the

¹ At his coronation.

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nation recovered so rapidly from its wounds that it began to forget them. A new race of politicians was springing up, whose martial ardour and vaulting ambition led them to undervalue the blessings of peace. Since 1719, when the influence of the few great territorial families had been merged in a multitude of needy gentlemen, the first Estate became the nursery, and afterwards the stronghold, of an opposition at once noble and democratic, which found its natural leaders in Carl Gyllenborg, Daniel Niclas von Höpken, and Carl Gustaf Tessin. Gyllenborg was a man of rare accomplishments and brilliant talents, but vain, corrupt, and unstable. His enemies insinuated that though he made a brave show, it was with false gems. The cold, cautious, and taciturn Höpken concealed beneath a simple, and even ridiculous exterior, a vigorous and supple intellect, fertile in expedients and resources. Morally he was altogether contemptible. He had been the sycophant before he became the persecutor of Görtz, and he hated Horn as only ingratitude can hate its benefactor. Tessin, the son of the great architect, young, generous, and enthusiastic, was the Admirable Crichton of the Opposition, with a brilliant future before him. These men and their followers were never weary of ridiculing the timid caution of the aged statesman, who sacrificed everything to perpetuate an inglorious peace, and derisively nicknamed his adherents Night-Caps (a term subsequently softened into Caps), themselves adopting the sobriquet Hats. These epithets instantly caught the public fancy. The nickname *night-cap* seemed exactly to suit the drowsy policy of a peace-loving dotard, while the three-cornered hat, worn by officers and gentlemen, as happily hit off the manly self-assertion of the Opposition, and when the Estates met in 1738 these party badges were in general use. That Riksdag was to mark a turning-point in Swedish history. The Hats carried every-

thing before them; Tessin won the land-marshalate by an enormous majority; the Caps were almost totally excluded from the Secret Committee, and after a spirited resistance of more than six months, the aged Horn was finally compelled to retire from a scene where for three-and-thirty years he had played a leading part. The Senate was then purged of Caps; Gyllenborg gained at last the long-coveted post of Chancellor; Tessin was sent to Paris as ambassador; the long and disastrous dominion of the Hats had begun.

The foreign policy of the Hats was a return to the historical alliance between France and Sweden, which had existed ever since the days when Richelieu and Oxenstjerna had fought side by side against the House of Austria, and, despite occasional jolts and jars, the alliance between the great northern and the great southern Power had, on the whole, been as loyal, and even as mutually advantageous, as any alliance recorded in history. When, however, Sweden descended to her natural position as a second-rate Power, the French alliance became a luxury too costly for her straitened means. Horn clearly perceived this, and his cautious neutrality was therefore the wisest statesmanship. But the politicians who had ousted Horn thought differently. To them prosperity without glory was a worthless possession. They aimed at nothing less than restoring Sweden to her former proud position as a great Power. France naturally hailed with satisfaction the rise of a faction which was content to be her armour-bearer in the North, and the rich golden streams which flowed continuously from Versailles to Stockholm during the next two generations was the political life-blood of the Hat party. Yet no alliance was ever more mischievous or illusory. The unsurpassable blundering of the Hats speedily upset all the calculations of their ally, and the millions lavished upon them were so many millions thrown away. Their first great blunder was the hasty and

ill-advised war with Russia. The European complications, consequent upon the almost simultaneous deaths of the Emperor Charles VI. and the Tsarina Anne, seemed to favour their adventurous schemes, and, despite the frantic protests of the Caps, a project for an invasion of Russian Finland was rushed through the premature Riksdag of 1740, which was devoted to the Hat party. On July 20, 1741, war was formally declared against Russia on the most frivolous pretexts, and a month later the Diet was dissolved and the Hat land-marshal, Carl Emil Levenhaupt, set off for Finland to take command of the army. The Hats were jubilant. The humiliation of Russia was taken for granted, and it was confidently declared in Stockholm that within six months' time she would have ceded her capital and been driven back to her native steppes. But even the first blow was not struck till six months after the declaration of war, and it was struck by the enemy, who utterly routed General Wrangel at Willamstrand, and captured and destroyed that frontier fortress. Nothing was done on either side for six months more, and then Levenhaupt made a "tacit truce" with the Russians through the mediation of the French ambassador at St. Petersburg. By the time that this "tacit truce" had come to an end, the Swedish forces were so demoralised that the mere rumour of a hostile attack made them abandon everything, and retire panic-stricken before purely imaginary invaders to Helsingfors, the capital of Swedish Finland, and before the end of the same year all Finland was in the hands of the Russians. The fleet, from which great things had been expected, was disabled from the first by a terrible epidemic, and throughout the war was little more than a huge floating hospital.

To face another Riksdag with such a war as this upon their consciences was a trial from which the Hats naturally shrank; but they had to meet it, and, to do them justice,

they showed themselves better parliamentary than military strategists. A motion for an inquiry into the conduct of the war was skilfully evaded by obtaining precedence for the succession question (Queen Ulrica Leonora had lately died childless, and the King was old), and they then opened negotiations with the Tsarina Elizabeth, who agreed to restitute the greater part of Finland if her cousin, Adolphus Frederick of Holstein, Prince Bishop of Lübeck, were elected successor to the Swedish crown. The Hats eagerly caught at the opportunity of recovering the Grand-Duchy and their own prestige along with it, and by the Peace of Abo the terms of the Tsarina were accepted, and only that part of Finland which lay beyond the Kymmene was retained by Russia.

Adolphus Frederick of Holstein, whom Russia had nominated to the throne of Sweden, was remotely connected with the ancient dynasty, his grandfather's grandmother having been the sister of the great Gustavus. Personally he was altogether insignificant, being chiefly remarkable as the father of Sweden's last great monarch and as the willing slave of a beautiful and talented but haughty and imperious consort, whom he also owed to his adopted country. That consort was Louisa Ulrica, Frederick the Great's sister, whom Tessin, now Chancellor, conducted with great pomp and magnificence from Berlin to Stockholm, where she speedily gathered around her a brilliant circle. Her friendship naturally became the prize for which both the factions contended. The Russian faction, as the Caps henceforth became, looked for certain support from Russia's *protégés*; but the French tastes and sympathies of the Voltairean Princess drew her towards the French faction. The maladroitness of the Tsarina, who presumed to scold the Prince and Princess for their political heterodoxy, only precipitated their inevitable defection. The proud spirit of Louisa Ulrica rebelled against such dictation. She ostentatiously threw in

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her lot with the Hats, who had, in the meantime, regained all their popularity by the spirit with which they resisted the insolent pretensions of Russia, and a great event which now occurred seemed to cement still more firmly the union between the young court and the Hats.

CHAPTER II.

YOUTH OF GUSTAVUS.

Birth of Gustavus—Count Tessin appointed his governor—Tessin's peculiar system of instruction—Mischievous influence of Louisa Ulrica on her son—Her character—"Letters from an Old Man to a Young Prince"—Gustavus's tutor, Olof von Dalin—Rupture between Tessin and Louisa Ulrica—Dalin practically supersedes Tessin—Resignation of Tessin—Death of King Frederick—Quarrels of the new King with the Senate—Abortive attempt at a revolution—Degradation of the King—Count Scheffer appointed Gustavus's new governor—His unfavourable report—Character of Gustavus—Mischievous effects of Tessin's system—Great improvement of the Prince at fourteen—Wins the heart of Scheffer—Gustavus's assiduity and amiability at eighteen—End of his pupilage.

ON January 24, 1746, at four o'clock in the morning, Stockholm was aroused from its slumbers by the roar of the cannons which saluted the long-desired and eagerly-expected heir to the throne. It was more than half a century since a royal prince had been born in Sweden, and the whole nation ran wild with joy. The Prince was christened Gustavus, a name so justly dear to every Swedish heart, and his education was intrusted to no less a person than Tessin.

That brilliant politician was just then at the zenith of his power. He had returned from Paris, where his diplomatic address and his exquisite wit had won him a European reputation, to succeed Gyllenborg as Chancellor, and an innocent attachment, founded upon mutual admiration, quickly arose between the fascinating Minister and the vivacious Princess Royal. For the next five years Tessin, who preserved all

the buoyant gaiety of youth long after he had passed the meridian of life, became the chosen friend and confidential adviser of the usually haughty and overbearing Louisa Ulrica, and the birth of Gustavus seemed, at first, to be an additional bond of union between them. Tessin, like everybody else, was struck by the child's extraordinary precocity, and resolved to educate him on a method of his own. An unusually vivid imagination and a marvellously retentive memory were the little fellow's strong points, and to cultivate these faculties to the utmost became Tessin's chief care. The usual school primers were dispensed with in the first instance, and the pupil had only to turn over engravings, while the governor expounded to him some entertaining book. At other times, Tessin would put the Prince through a course of technical study, explaining to him, by means of diagrams, the nature of various trades and handicrafts, accompanying his explanations by the liveliest illustrative pantomime, imitating, for instance, the noise of the machinery and the gestures of the workmen, and occasionally throwing in snatches of artisans' songs, so that a stranger, entering the room unawares, might have taken the Swedish Chancellor for a strolling player. Frequently, moreover, Tessin, a born actor himself, would give the studies of the Prince a dramatic form, these histrionic performances being frequently prolonged till the governor broke down from sheer hoarseness. Whatever may have been the faults of this system, and it has been attacked savagely enough, there can be no doubt that it enabled the little Prince to pick up a vast amount of the most miscellaneous information which he never afterwards forgot.

The Crown Prince—Frederick Adolphus—seems to have troubled himself little with his son's education, and it would have been better for the boy if Louisa Ulrica had imitated, in this respect, the example of her easy-going consort. With

many gifts and graces, not a few virtues, and frequently the best intentions, it was the fate of Louisa Ulrica to bring misfortune upon all who were intimately connected with her, and her eldest son suffered more than any one else from her baneful influence. Her very fondness was as mischievous now as her jealousy was to be hereafter. Like many other clever women educated beyond their intelligence, she was a confirmed crotcheteer, and she clung to her crotchets with characteristic obstinacy. Thus she forbade the little Prince to play at any of the games in which boys of his age delight, lest he should perspire too freely. He was fed almost entirely on soups, creams, and vegetables, because it was an axiom with his anxious mother that solid food dulled the mind. The same care for his intelligence induced her to keep him up till long after midnight, in order that he might not sleep his wits away. But Louisa Ulrica was equally determined that her son should not be bored by too much work. His childish studies had all to pass muster before her, and half of them were at once cashiered. French was the only foreign language she would suffer him to learn, though Tessin pleaded hard for English. Against moral and natural philosophy and mathematics she declared open war. She wanted her son to grow up a Prince, she said, not a pedantic German professor. For the rest, Tessin was free to teach whatever he, or rather whatever his pupil liked, for it was distinctly understood that Gustavus was not to be forced to learn anything by rote. As to religion, Louisa Ulrica really did not see the use of it. No doubt, in her letters to her son, she occasionally reminded him that "piety was the surest preservative against all error," and exhorted him "to reverence and respect the Supreme Being;" but her own private conduct was a curious commentary upon these pious admonitions. In the select court circle, where her wit and accomplishments entitled her to

absolute sway, revealed religion was the favourite butt of the merry company, and the sorriest jests at the ministers and the mysteries of Christianity were always sure of applause. Brought up in such a school from his infancy, it is wonderful that Gustavus did not become as thorough a sceptic as his uncle, the Great Frederick.

The earliest reliable glimpse we get at Gustavus's boyhood is through the famous "Letters from an Old Man to a Young Prince," which Tessin addressed to his pupil between his fifth and his seventh year, the little fellow taking a sudden fancy for the epistolary form of instruction. Even at the present day, when education has been reduced to a science, it would be difficult to name a book for the young at once so useful and so agreeable as these justly famous letters. The earlier ones consist, for the most part, of fables and moral stories, judiciously enlivened by pleasant anecdotes and quaint conceits. As the letters proceed, the apologue gives way to more direct teaching, the governor displaying a rare skill in the adaptation of his own vast erudition and experience to the comprehension of his pupil. In particular, the dissertations on conchology, on ancient and modern history, and on the dramatic art, are models of lucid exposition. The book, too, is also a real contribution to polite literature, the style being distinguished by a courtly grace and a refined and delicate gaiety. The promenade through the picture-galleries of Drottningholm Palace might have been written by Addison himself. The picture of little Gustavus given in these letters is highly favourable. His worst faults seem to have been slovenliness, conceit, and petulance, but he is frequently praised for his industry and truthfulness. He seems to have made wonderful progress in French, which he preferred to his mother-tongue, but history was already his favourite study, and was to remain so throughout his life.

Tessin's principal assistants were Count Nils Adam Bjelke, the Prince's vice-governor, and Olof von Dalin, his tutor. Of the former, the beloved "Bekkie" of his infancy, Gustavus himself has left us the following flattering portrait:—"He possessed all the virtues and few of the foibles of the old nobility. I may say that I have met with nobody with so much integrity, and his judgment was as sound as his character was upright." Dalin, Sweden's first modern poet, and incomparably her best essayist,¹ was a Cap, and therefore Tessin's political antagonist; but this did not blind the Minister to the merits of the poet, and at his persuasion the Estates gave the post to Dalin. At first the appointment was not at all to Louisa's taste. She could scarcely endure the sight of the purblind, solemn-looking man, who stammered and stuttered when he tried to talk French, and had a queer trick of laughing noiselessly but spasmodically at his own timid jests. Tessin had even to pledge his word never to leave Dalin alone with the Prince. Who could have guessed that in less than a twelvemonth the shy and awkward poet would become the darling, and the brilliant and engaging Minister, the bugbear of the young court? The changeful course of politics was to work this wonder.

Louisa Ulrica's ruling passion was an inordinate love of power. To those who, like her meek and dove-like consort, were content to remain her slaves, she proved an indulgent protectress, but woe to all who attempted to cross her sovereign will. The homage of a Tessin had been the sweetest incense ever offered to her vanity. She had built the most ambitious hopes on the friendship of one who was both the first Minister of the crown and the leader of the dominant Hat party. But she had taken an altogether false estimate of Tessin's character. She had mistaken his

¹ See last chapter of vol. ii.

bland complaisance for pliability, little dreaming that beneath his amiable trifling lay an ambition and a force of character fully equal to her own. Add to this that a more determined foe of autocracy than Tessin never existed. His manners were courtly, but his principles were republican. Brought up in the belief that monarchy had been the bane of Sweden, he was firmly convinced that the Constitution of 1720, which degraded kingship into a mere state decoration, was the most perfect form of government devisable. The only authority he recognised was the Riksdag, from which he derived his power, and to which he was alone responsible. A collision between Tessin and Louisa Ulrica was therefore inevitable; the only wonder is that it did not come sooner.

In the course of 1750, Tessin, alarmed at the growing cordiality between Sweden's hereditary foes, Russia and Denmark, had skilfully interposed with the scheme of a family alliance between the Swedish and Danish courts, a scheme which Frederick V. of Denmark eagerly welcomed. Tessin thereupon arranged a betrothal between his little pupil and the Danish Princess Royal, without even consulting the parents of the infant bridegroom. Now Denmark had ever been the bitterest foe of the House of Holstein; the Danish King had even refused, at one time, to recognise Adolphus Frederick as King of Sweden. To both the Crown Prince and Princess, therefore, the Danish match was not merely odious, it was monstrous, and a terrible explosion occurred. Violent scenes took place between the august parents and Tessin. On one occasion Tessin was accused of drawing his sword upon his future sovereign, while the mild Frederick Adolphus admitted to laying his own hand on the poker. Both parents appealed to the Senate against the unnatural match, but in vain. H.R.H. was finally compelled to sign the detested contract,

and wrote the usual letters of congratulation with tears in his eyes.

Louisa Ulrica never forgave Tessin, and though she could not injure him politically, she harassed him day by day with the pettiest spite and vindictiveness, and of course endeavoured to poison the mind of his pupil against him. But the bitterest mortification Tessin had to endure was to see himself completely supplanted by "ce coquin Dalin," as he contemptuously styled his quondam *protégé*. We have said that Dalin's stiff and odd exterior had, at first, appeared queer enough to a smart young Princess whose keen sense of the ridiculous was never disturbed by any charitable scruples. But Dalin's superlative merits as a wit and a poet could not long escape the notice of such a connoisseur as Louisa Ulrica, and at last the preciousness of the gem seemed rather enhanced by its bizarre setting. Dalin, on the other hand, was irresistibly fascinated by the brilliant and beautiful Princess. To her he sacrificed both his principles and his talents, and his Muse forfeited her legitimate place among the stars to become the frivolous playmate of idle maids-of-honour—

"A bonfire by Louisa's throne."

But it is not with Dalin the pasquant,¹ but with Dalin the pedagogue that we have to do here; for when Tessin, mortified by his underling's success, suddenly discovered that the state of his health required repose, and retired to sulk with dignity for more than a year among the lakes and groves of his favourite Ackerö, it was Dalin who mainly took his place, and very soon became a prime favourite with his pupil. That Dalin was really a good instructor there can be little doubt. In 1756, when Gustavus was publicly examined by a committee of the Estates, the result was

¹ See last chapter of vol. ii.

brilliant, the marshal of the Diet assuring the House of Peers, that H.R.H. had made astonishing progress and showed a wisdom far beyond his years. At a subsequent meeting of the Senate, however, some of the fathers of the Fatherland gravely shook their heads at the sad perverseness displayed by young Gus in his essay on Roman history, wherein he openly expressed his preference for Cæsar, the rebel against the Constitution, to Pompey, its defender.

When Tessin returned from his retreat to resume his office of governor, he had some difficulty in recognising in the sullen, obstinate, imperious urchin before him the amiable and engaging child he had quitted only eighteen months before. Although Tessin saw that his influence was quite gone, he hopelessly endeavoured to recover his lost ground, and at last appealed to the mother for assistance. Fresh scenes occurred, much exaggerated, no doubt, but highly discreditable to all parties, and then the old man laid down his weary charge and retired from public life altogether.

But Tessin's offences were speedily forgotten in the terrible catastrophe which now overtook the royal family.

In March 1751 old King Frederick died. His prerogatives had gradually dwindled down to vanishing-point. Latterly he had become too decrepit to even affix his sign-manual to official documents, and, at his own request, a so-called "name-stamp," with the royal signature engraved on it, had been manufactured to assist him in his purely mechanical duties.

Adolphus Frederick, who was now called by an unkindly fate to wear a crown, had nothing kingly about him but the name. A quiet inoffensive creature, he would have made a highly respectable country gentleman and a model country parson; but tied as he was for life to the skirts of an imperious consort, his reign was to be a continual turmoil, and

his life was to be harassed and vexed by other people's quarrels. His troubles began early. The Estates seemed bent upon going out of their way to mortify the mildest of Princes. They forced upon him a new Chancellor, the erudite Count A. J. Höpken, renowned as the most pregnant and incisive orator of his day, who succeeded Tessin in 1751; they disputed the King's right to appoint his own household or create peers; they declared that all state appointments were to go by seniority; they threatened to use a royal "name-stamp" if his Majesty refused to append his sign-manual to official documents; and they practically denied the King and Queen the right of educating their own children by arbitrarily dismissing all the Crown Prince's tutors and governors, and appointing others whose political sentiments were acceptable to the majority of the Riksdag. An attempted revolution, planned by the Queen and a few devoted young noblemen in 1756, was easily and remorselessly crushed. The ringleaders were tortured and then beheaded, and though the unhappy King did not, as he anticipated, share the fate of Charles Stuart, he was humiliated as never monarch was humiliated before. The Estates, indeed, would gladly have abolished the very title of King, but this was more than they dared to do. Behind the Legislature stood the nation; the nation had a strong sentimental preference for the monarchical form of government, and any attempt to alter it would have instantly led to a civil war. The Estates, therefore, had to be content with the piquant pleasure of openly insulting their helpless sovereign, and they stung him to the quick by means of an absolutely unique document, which, ostensibly an instruction to the young Crown Prince's governor, was in reality a violent tirade against his royal father. Royalty must indeed have been in evil case when "most humble and most dutiful subjects" could venture to remind their "most mighty

[*sic*] and most gracious King" that he was not fit to educate his own children; that kings, in general, are the natural enemies of their subjects; that in "free states" they merely exist on sufferance; that because they are occasionally invested with pomp and dignity, "more for the honour of the realm than for the sake of the person who may occupy the chief place in the pageant," they must not therefore imagine that "they are more than men, while other men are less than worms [*sic*]; that as "the glare and glitter" of a court tend to puff them up with the idea that they are made of finer stuff than their fellow-creatures, they would do well to occasionally visit the peasant's lowly hut, and there learn that it is because of the wasteful extravagance of a court that the peasant's loaf is so light and his burdens are so heavy—and so on through a score of long-winded paragraphs. This "instruction" was solemnly presented to his Majesty by the marshal of the Diet and the talmen of the three lower Estates, and he was requested to present it with his own hand to the Prince's new governor.

The new governor, who was to bring up the Crown Prince in the fear of God and of the Estates, was Senator Count Carl Frederick Scheffer, like Tessin (whom he had succeeded at Paris), an able diplomatist, and one of the pillars of the still dominant Hat party. He was a man of brilliant parts and upright character, but impetuous, irritable, and meddlesome, with an admiration of everything French which almost amounted to mania, and a touching belief in the absolute infallibility of the Swedish Constitution. His chief assistant in his new office was Samuel Klingensjtjerna, a mathematician of European reputation and a Latin scholar of great eminence. On the whole, better men for the post could scarcely have been chosen.

But of what use were abilities and experience to preceptors who lacked the confidence of their pupil? The little Prince,

who had been deeply affected by the loss of Dalin and Bjelke, was naturally suspicious of strangers whom he knew to be hateful to his parents, and wilfully thwarted them in everything. He even ridiculed them in a little French comedy of his own composition, entitled *Un Jeune Seigneur de Onze Ans*, in which he himself is the hero. This dramatic essay is amusing enough, and has some biographical interest. The little hero's governor enters and upbraids him for being girlish in his habits, much given to playacting, and fond of fine clothes. The tutor, Mr. Barbarissimus, who follows, commences to read Cornelius with him and begins—"At ille Carthaginiem," &c., whereupon the pupil strikes a tragic attitude and indignantly inquires—

"Veux tu me conseiller de commettre un forfait ?
D'abandoner Clélie et prendre ce malfait ?"

Geometry and geography fare as ill as the classics. Finally, the parents come in to hear how the pupil is progressing, whereupon the young rebel runs away. The piece is dated June 21, 1756, and at the bottom of the MS. is written, in childish scrawl—"Conforme à l'original.—Gustave.¹" The dignified Scheffer must have pulled a very wry face when this precious production was brought to him by one of the gentlemen-in-waiting, with a polite request from the author, whether his Excellency had anything to add to it.

It was while labouring under extreme irritation that Scheffer wrote that famous report to the Estates as to his pupil which anti-Gustavan historians triumphantly point to as positive proof of the depravity of the child, instead of seeing in it simply the silliness of the governor. In this report the thoughtless vagaries of a spoilt child are magni-

¹ We are told by Fersen that the little Prince at the age of ten composed a tragedy on the death of Julian, which was not without merit.

fied into downright crimes. The sweet-tooth, natural to growing boys, is described as "unbounded gluttony." Little Gus's inattention to the tedious devotional exercises prescribed for him by the Estates is labelled precocious godlessness. The natural shrinking of a delicate child from corporal chastisement is branded as poltroonery. But, to Scheffer's mind, the most alarming symptom of depravity was the contempt with which his pupil already regarded the Constitution. When Scheffer sententiously remarked that the commonweal should be the first care of princes, the Prince saucily retorted that the commonweal was a chimera. When Scheffer expatiated on the felicity of a Swedish King, who had only to pocket a bountiful salary for doing what his Senate told him, the pupil sullenly retorted that he would never accept a crown on such conditions. As to virtues in his pupil, Scheffer is very sorry to say so, but "if I except the Prince's love and respect for his parents, and his innate propensity to speak the truth" (rather large exceptions, one might have thought), "I know of not a single disposition in H.R.H. which deserves the name of virtue."

But even Scheffer could not fail to be struck by the parts of his pupil. "H.R.H.," he says, "is endowed by nature with all the advantages of mind and spirit which can possibly be desired. His apprehension is quick and facile, his memory remarkable, his judgment acute, his imagination ardent, his powers of reflection far beyond what might be expected from his tender years. . . . He can relate all manner of things with incredible ease, always using, moreover, the language most suitable to the occasion, and presenting his facts in a well-ordered sequence of ideas. But," adds the governor, "with an indescribable tenderness for his own convenience, and an abhorrence of everything which appears tiresome, he will learn nothing but what his vigorous memory can easily retain, and can seldom be induced to direct his attention to

subjects which require mental exertion." Another most curious feature in a child of ten was his passion for the stage. "No sooner has he seen a play," continues Scheffer, "than his memory absorbs the whole of it, often retaining long portions of the dialogue, for the most part such as were recited by female characters, especially when gorgeously attired. Often, while he is being dressed and undressed, you may hear him solemnly declaim the monologues of queens and princesses, decking himself out the while with towels and cloths to represent trains or head-dresses. Nay, hours after he has retired to rest, he has been caught standing up in bed, with his sleeves turned up and the front of his night-shirt turned down, . . . repeating all the time, in a subdued voice, some of his many feminine rôles ; and though frequently scolded for these bad habits, he cannot be induced to renounce them."

The fact is that the cockering system of his mother, supplemented by Tessin's histrionic method of instruction, was now producing its fruits. The natural indolence of the Prince had been encouraged instead of checked, and his almost morbidly intense imagination had been developed at the expense of his other faculties. For good and for evil,¹ the seeds of that absorbing passion for dramatic display which was to characterise Gustavus III. throughout life, had been sown with too lavish a hand, and it needed all the skill and patience of the new preceptors to weed down the injurious crop. That they partially succeeded redounds greatly to their credit, but unfortunately we are unable to follow out the process. Our authorities fail us at the turning-point of the boy's life, as for the next three years the young Prince vanishes entirely from our view ; and when in 1760 the

¹ For good, because to it the Swedish stage owes its two best acting dramas ; for evil, because the royal dramatist too often mingled histrionics with politics.

curtain again rises, and the now fourteen years old Prince again comes before us, we scarcely recognise him. The spoiled child of ten, who used to play with dolls like a little girl, is already a man at fourteen. His most conspicuous and attractive characteristic¹ at this period is his exalted hero-worship, which regards even the highest intellectual gifts as of little worth if unaccompanied by magnanimity. *His* heroes were heroes indeed. Of all the ancients, it was the chivalrous Camillus, thrice the saviour of an ungrateful country, whom he loved the most. His favourites among the moderns were Henry of Navarre, Henry V. of England, Gustavus Vasa and Charles XII. of Sweden; but far above them all was placed the incomparable Gustavus Adolphus, whom his namesake and imitator always regarded as the greatest and best of men. We further remark in him an assiduous application and a careful cultivation of that natural charm of manner which was to make him so irresistibly fascinating. With the literature of France he was most intimately acquainted. There was scarcely a French book of any note that he had not read. He was a diligent student, though by no means a slavish admirer, of the Encyclopædists, and the *Henriade* he knew by heart. As to his winning manners, they had already so captivated his governor and tutors that they absolutely idolised him, and declared that he was "a master in the science of winning the heart." Nay, fickle fortune had a still greater surprise in store for the sternly republican Scheffer. At no distant day he was to become the political disciple of his own pupil, and the most determined foe of that sacred Constitution of which he was now the most zealous guardian.

In the spring of 1762 Gustavus's pupilage came to an end. The Estates considering that the Crown Prince, now

¹ These data will be found in the correspondence of Scheffer with his pupil, a selection from which was presented to the Secret Committee in 1760.

in his eighteenth year, knew as much as he needed to know, relieved Scheffer of his functions, but Klingensjerna was ordered to remain at Stockholm in case his services might still be required. Gustavus, in his Memoirs, is loud in his praises of the skill and patience of Scheffer and his staff, and regretfully acknowledges that he never made a proper use of their learning and talents.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAID OF DENMARK.

Baron Pechlin and Count A. F. von Fersen— The Hats plunge into the Seven Years' War—The Riksdag of 1760.—The Hat dominion shaken—The Riksdag of 1765-66—Fall of the Hats—The Caps in power — Their economical policy— They draw near to Russia —Determine to carry through the Danish match— Hostility of Gustavus to the project— His letter to Bjelke— Finally gives way—Character of the Princess Sophia Magdalena—Her arrival in Sweden—First impressions — Cruel conduct of the Queen-mother towards her — The marriage — Misery of the Princess— Indifference of her husband — Gustavus remonstrated with in vain.

WE must now take a brief review of the state of Swedish politics during the last four years; but first we must introduce to the reader two politicians who now began to exert a leading influence upon their countrymen, and whose fortunes are inextricably interwoven with the fortunes of Gustavus III. These two politicians were Count Frederick Axel von Fersen, subsequently Gustavus's ablest and most determined antagonist, and Baron Carl Frederick Pechlin, his future assassin.

Fersen was descended from a Scotch family (Macpherson) that had been settled in Sweden for many generations, and had prospered there. He was the wealthiest Swedish nobleman of his time, and his purse was always at the disposal of his party. Fersen enjoys the honourable distinction of being the purest of politicians at a time when the whole course of Swedish politics was tainted at its source. He was also a singularly moderate partisan, though

to a cold, cautious, self-contained nature like his, moderation was rather an instinct than a virtue. He always prided himself on possessing a judicial mind, and he hated his very enemies in a dignified, gentlemanlike sort of way, though his antagonism was as inflexible as the antagonism of such high-minded haters generally is. His abilities were considerable. As an orator in an age of orators, he had few equals, and his handsome face and majestic figure lent effect even to his commonplaces. All the Fersens indeed were famous for their gifts of mind and body. Three of the daughters of Count Frederick were among the reigning *belles* at the fastidiously critical court of Gustavus III., and the bright eyes and finished graces of his eldest son, Hans Axel, even disturbed the tranquillity of Marie Antoinette. Fersen's contemporaries often wondered why a man of his ability so persistently declined high offices to which he seemed to be born; but Fersen had either too much common-sense or too little moral courage to imperil his reputation by attempting to increase it. Want of initiative was the fatal defect of his character. In times of crisis he was useless.

Baron Pechlin, a Holsteiner by descent, was at once the most astute, the most audacious, and the most abandoned of political intriguers. His whole career was an unbroken series of treacheries and treasons, and the easy effrontery with which this political chameleon changed his colours has rarely been surpassed. That Pechlin should have wielded such enormous influence as to receive the nickname of "General of the Riksdag," is significant of the foulness of the political atmosphere in which he flourished, but it is also an involuntary tribute to the talents of the arch-renegade himself. Pechlin indeed was no vulgar intriguer. He was crafty, yet not cowardly; corrupt, yet not mercenary; treacherous, yet not vindictive. Neither love of power nor love

of money, but an ingrained passion for intrigue for its own sake, seems to have been the leading motive of his otherwise inexplicable conduct.

Fersen was a Hat by conviction. Pechlin professed himself to be a Cap, and the star of the Caps just then, after a long eclipse of twenty-five years, was once more in the ascendant. The Hat game, indeed, was by this time pretty nearly played out. Their last little speculation (a heedless plunging into the Seven Years' War at the instance of France) had utterly wrecked their resources. The French subsidies, which might have sufficed for a six weeks' demonstration (it was generally assumed that the King of Prussia would give little trouble to a European coalition), proved quite inadequate, and after five unsuccessful campaigns, the unhappy Hats were glad to make peace on any terms, and ignominiously withdrew from a little war which had cost the country 40,000 men and £5,000,000. When the Riksdag met in 1760, the indignation against the Hat leaders was so violent, that an impeachment seemed inevitable, and Chancellor Höpken hastened to resign to save his head; but Pechlin, suddenly changing sides at the very moment of the Cap triumph, contrived to pull the Hats out of the mire by a series of the most intricate and amazing intrigues. Finally, Pechlin over-reached himself and was excluded from the Riksdag, but not before he had involved everything in such inextricable confusion that the session was brought to a close by the mutual consent of both the exhausted factions. It had lasted twenty months, and all it did was to bolster up the Hat Government for another four years. But the day of reckoning could not be postponed for ever, and when the Estates met again in 1765, it brought the Caps into power at last. Their leader, Rudbeck, was elected marshal of the Diet over Fersen by a large majority, and out of the hundred seats in the Secret Committee, the Hats

(who were in a hopeless minority in all four Estates) only succeeded in getting ten. The Caps struck at once at the weak point of their opponents by ordering a Budget report to be made, and it was speedily found that the whole financial system of the Hats had been based upon reckless improvidence and wilful misrepresentation, and that the only fruits of their long rule was the addition of £1,500,000 to the National Debt (an enormous amount in those days for a poor country like Sweden), and such a depreciation of the note circulation that £15 in paper was worth only £5 in specie. This startling revelation led to an all-round retrenchment, carried into effect with a drastic thoroughness which has earned for this Parliament the name of the "Reduction Riksdag." Hundreds of pensions were abolished, thousands were reduced; most of the sinecures invented by the Hats were swept away; the civil list was cut down to starvation-point; the Swedish East India Company was nearly ruined by heavy fines; much crown-land which had been hypothecated was redeemed with an arbitrariness which could scarcely be distinguished from injustice, and all the leading Hat merchants were persecuted and plundered. By means of these measures the Caps succeeded in transferring £500,000 from the pockets of the rich to the empty exchequer, reducing the debt by £1,150,158, and establishing some sort of equilibrium between revenue and expenditure. They also introduced a few useful reforms, the most remarkable of which was the liberty of the press. But they made no serious attempt to alter the crazy and vicious Constitution, though they had the satisfaction of driving out the Hat Senate, and appointing a Ministry of their own, with the renegade Löwenhjelm as president. Their most important political act was to throw in their lot definitely with Russia, so as to counterpoise the influence of France, and it was principally to please the Tsarina that the match arranged

long before between the Crown Prince Gustavus and the Danish Princess Sophia Magdalena, after innumerable delays, and despite the most ingenious counterplotting on the part of the Court and the Hats, was finally carried through.

The Princess Sophia Magdalena, Gustavus's bride elect, was the eldest surviving child of Frederick V. of Denmark and Louisa, daughter of George II. of England. Her parts were good, though an invincible shyness prevented her from displaying them to advantage. She was blessed with a wonderfully mild and placid temper, which her enemies attributed to insensibility. Her pleasures were few and simple, and a deep but unobtrusive piety coloured every action of her life; but her character and her tastes were so utterly different from those of her intended husband, that little good could be augured from such a match. The vivacious and mercurial Prince could scarcely hope to find a companion in a consort who would look upon his most innocent pastimes as profane and sinful, and consider his most elevated tastes whimsical or useless. Gustavus's passion for the stage amounted almost to mania; his future wife regarded the theatre and all connected with it with undisguised aversion. To Gustavus, polite literature and the fine arts were, not merely the condiments, but the necessities of life. Sophia Magdalena's æsthetic wants were amply satisfied by Kingo's hymns and Gerner's sermons, and her taste for art did not extend much beyond the woodcuts in her Holbein Bible. Even the Danish Minister at Stockholm, Joachim Otto von Schack, no small part of whose duty it was to play the spy on the Swedish royal family, doubted whether the proposed match were advisable. Schack was an able, honest and courageous diplomatist; but he regarded everything Swedish through Danish spectacles, and heartily reciprocated the extreme

dislike with which both Louisa Ulrica and her eldest son always regarded him. His private report to his Court of the young Prince's character was distinctly unfavourable. After a brief preamble, enumerating and disparaging Gustavus's gifts and accomplishments, Schack thus proceeds: "In general he loves pleasure, or fancies he does; but there is not a single amusement which can please him for five minutes at a time. Riding he sets little value upon, hunting he detests. He dances indeed with impetuous vivacity . . . but without finish. . . . Of all the passions, 'tis pride which dominates him most. . . . The slightest contradiction wounds his vanity, and his mere presence is sufficient to embarrass the whole company. He has a singular fondness for everything which goes by the name of etiquette, and those ceremonies, in which the great point is to play a part and appear with effect, have a mighty attraction for him. . . . He is extremely reserved, which makes people fancy him suspicious, nor does he possess any attachment to any one . . . and amongst all the courtiers there is not a single person to whom he confidentially opens his heart. . . . He is still too young to enable one to judge whether he be vindictive, but judging from the constancy of his [hostile] sentiments towards us, it is at least clear that he does not readily rid himself of prejudices. . . . He is anything but generous, and now that he has the control of his own privy purse, traits of economy not at all corresponding with his love of display come every day to light. Some years ago it was fancied that he would be a lover of the sex, but this belief is no longer entertained, and though, for reasons easy to divine, no one here would be very much shocked if he attached himself to some lady of quality, and every effort has been made to facilitate such a connection, nothing has hitherto come of it." Schack concludes by taking the gloomiest

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view of the Prince's future, and even goes so far as to rashly play the seer; but, in the event, his prognostications all fell so very wide of the mark, that one cannot but marvel how a man of his acumen and penetration could have allowed his prejudices to have so grossly misled him. It may create some surprise that Schack's evil report did not somewhat damp the ardour of the Danish court for the Swedish match. But political expediency proved superior to merely personal considerations, and the negotiations for the union were pushed on as rapidly as possible. On September 2, 1766, a special Swedish envoy, Count Balthasar Horn, escorted the Princess from Copenhagen to Helsingborg, where Gustavus was already waiting to meet his bride.

Gustavus fully shared the antipathy of his parents to the Danish match, and for a long time had seriously thought of repudiating the whole engagement. But of late he had begun to vacillate. The domestic tyranny of the Queen was becoming intolerable to the high-spirited youth; he longed for an establishment of his own. Besides, it was now clear that the nation, as a whole, regarded the match with favour, and all the world extolled to the skies the amiability of the bride. Yet as late as the end of 1765, Gustavus was agitated by the most cruel suspense, and in his distress took counsel of his old tutor, Count Bjelke. "It is this unlucky marriage of mine which troubles me so," he wrote; "you know what little inclination I have for this match . . . but public opinion has now expressed itself in favour of the union . . . though the King and Queen are more than ever opposed to it, and do their utmost to hinder it. . . . Of late I have considered the matter from every point of view, and the more I do so, the more repugnance I feel to yield to the public voice. The high birth of the Princess and our knowledge of her character speak in her

favour; but the Queen's aversion is perhaps a stronger argument the other way, and my perplexity is all the greater as I shall be wanting in my duty whichever course I may take. If I marry her, I offend the King and Queen for life . . . and the respectful affection I feel for my parents, and the recollection of all they have done for me . . . would make me for ever miserable if I thought I were undutiful to them. It is true that their arguments are not particularly good; but they are my parents after all, and it behoves me to obey them. I know not what resolution to come to in this extremity." Finally he begs for Bjelke's advice and promises to abide by it. Bjelke unhesitatingly advised him to sacrifice his personal to his public duties, and Gustavus unswervingly followed his counsel.

So the Prince hastened down to Helsingborg to meet his bride, and his first impressions of her were distinctly favourable. "She is pretty without being beautiful," wrote he to his old governor, Scheffer; "her figure is well proportioned, her bearing dignified; but her manner is somewhat too condescending for her rank, and her shyness altogether too excessive for a lady of quality. She is mild and gentle (benevolence itself, in fact), and her letters show that she does not lack wit, though extreme timidity prevents her from displaying it in conversation. In fact, I really believe I have hit upon a wife that will suit me."

The Cap Government, whose rage for economy was now at its height, behaved on the occasion of the Crown Prince's marriage more like petty hucksters than dignified statesmen. All the arrangements were incredibly mean and shabby. The sumptuous trousseau of the Princess had to wait for weeks at Helsingborg for lack of waggons to convey it to Stockholm; the ancient state carriages were dragged from their hiding-places to do duty once more, instead of being broken up for firewood, and poor Count Horn, the Govern-

ment envoy, was fairly at his wits' end for money when Gustavus, in the joy of his heart, decided to add three extra days to the niggardly fortnight prescribed by the Senate. Gustavus was particularly anxious as to what his mother would think of his bride and how she would treat her, and his correspondence during the journey shows how eager he was to propitiate his exacting parent without disparaging the Princess. Thus, he hastens to disarm his mother's jealousy by assuring her that his bride is no beauty, and that he is in no danger of falling desperately in love with her. He flatters Louisa Ulrica's vanity by assuring her that her love is more precious to him than life itself, yet he never loses an opportunity of insinuating a good word for the Princess, and there is even a reproachful tone in his request that his "dear mother" would occasionally do him the great favour of inserting in her letters to him some loving greeting for the Princess that he may show to her. But Louisa Ulrica was very far from doing him even this little favour; in fact, there is too often a cruel cynicism in her tone towards the Princess which is little short of inhuman. "*Prenez-garde à vous, Madame!*" had been the first words which Gustavus had addressed to his bride as he helped her over the slippery bridge; and the kill-joys, who are never absent from such festivities, of course regarded this salutation as of very sinister augury. The Queen, in a letter to her son, maliciously fastened upon the incident at once with characteristic heartlessness. "One must confess," she wrote, "that you are very energetic. The first sentence you address to your future wife conveys a lesson and a moral warning, '*Prenez-garde à vous, Madame!*' Don't flirt, don't be indiscreet, don't be jealous, don't scold, don't be a silly shame-face!" On November 4, their Royal Highnesses made their solemn entry into the capital, and were married in the Palace Chapel by the Swedish Primate. The very

week after her wedding the troubles of the unhappy Princess began. She was disagreeably surprised to find that her every movement was watched and noted by the spies of her mother-in-law. She was never allowed to receive visitors, except in the presence of her Swedish ladies-in-waiting. She was snubbed for not taking part in private theatricals. She was ridiculed for not wearing rouge. She was called stingy for refusing to gamble. She was obliged to part with her Danish maids. It was only by the most ingenious artifices that she could steal an occasional interview with the Danish Minister and his wife, her only friends. The natural timidity of the unfortunate Princess was increased tenfold by her growing sense of complete isolation, and there were moments when she broke down altogether. In the early spring of 1767, however, the young couple migrated for a few weeks to the Castle of Ekholmsund, and this country excursion brought the Princess some relief. Gustavus, no longer under the jealous eye of his mother, began, for the first time in his life, to taste the pleasures of independence, and the tranquillity and solitude of their new abode tended to draw the young couple somewhat more closely together. Gustavus declared to his friends that the Princess was becoming "a little more like a human being," and, to do him justice, throughout the Ekholmsund trip, he treated his young wife with marked attention, and even tenderness. She, too, lost much of her constraint, and brighter days seemed to be in store for them both. But no sooner had they returned to Stockholm than the Prince resumed his former coldness, which, of course, was followed by a corresponding depression of spirits in the Princess. Gustavus was never deliberately cruel to his consort; cruelty was altogether foreign to his naturally gentle nature. Yet the married life of the unfortunate Princess must, at first, have been unutterably wretched. Like a pale and silent

ghost, she wandered about a court which was one day to be her own, unamused by its amusements, and joyless amidst its joys. If an expression of satisfaction sometimes escaped her lips, it was immediately followed by a gloomy taciturnity that speedily affected the whole company. She was treated with wanton neglect by her own ladies-in-waiting, and many of them were heartless or thoughtless enough to jest about the lonely and peculiar position of the Crown Princess, who, though treated with the deference due to a matron, to all appearance was likely to remain a maid. Her husband too, began to treat her with marked indifference, and rumours¹ even reached her that he consoled himself in the society of other ladies for the intolerable dullness of his married life. The graver and more correct members of a court which had been wont, for more than a generation, to see connubial love exalted by the example of their sovereigns, were scandalised by this unnatural estrangement, and some of Gustavus's private friends even ventured to remonstrate with him on the impropriety of his conduct. The Prince listened to these remonstrances patiently enough, but when he condescended to reply at all, he explained his aversion as due to "the boredom which follows the Princess wherever she goes," and declared that though reasons of State had induced him to give her his hand, his heart was not at the behest of politics, and that the more he was worried with exhortations to love his consort, the more he would be inclined to loathe her. It was evident that time alone could do anything in a case of this kind, so the royal consorts were in future left to adjust their own differences.

¹ There is good reason to believe that they were nothing more than rumours, however, as they rest on very dubious authority.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SEVEN DAYS' INTERREGNUM.

Difficult position of Gustavus as Crown Prince—Reaction against the Caps—Their suicidal foreign policy—Political position of Sweden—Gustavus naturally inclined to favour the Hats—The Cap leaders—Rudbeck—Serenius—Frietzsky—Alliance between the Hats and the Court—Distress of the nation—Its irritation against the Caps—Obstinacy of the Cap Senate—The Cronacker affair—Abdication of the King—Scenes in the Senate—The Interregnum—The Senate forced to give way and summon a Riksdag—Defeat of the Caps at the elections—The Diet of Norrköping—Treachery of Pechlin—Dismissal of the Cap Senate—The Riksdag removes to Stockholm—Disappoints all hopes of reform—Rage and despair of the Crown Prince.

It is with a sense of relief that we turn from the miserable tragi-comedy of Gustavus's early married life to the more exhilarating spectacle of his first public exploit.

The Prince had had next to no political education. The little he knew of statecraft he had picked up as best he could. The leading politicians of both parties, from the very first, looked askance at the keen-witted, aspiring youth, while his mother, so far from rejoicing in the precocious genius of her eldest son, already regarded him as a dangerous rival. Every possible obstacle was thrown in his way. The Estates refused him permission to study war in the army of his uncle, Frederick the Great, lest he should learn to undervalue the blessings of a free constitution in that school of enlightened despotism. His mother as good as forbade him to take any part in the deliberations of the Senate, and his very presence in the

council-chamber plainly caused her such poignant anguish that he thought it best to discontinue his attendance there altogether. Thus, full of ambitious energy, yet constrained to stand in the background, Gustavus learnt betimes to weigh his words, disguise his thoughts, and keep a constant watch upon himself and others. He followed with the keenest interest the ever-shifting course of events; carefully studied the characters of the politicians by whom those events were controlled; and had already resolved to seize the first opportunity for rescuing the monarchy from the constitutional bondage under which it languished. That opportunity came much sooner than he had anticipated.

The Reduction Riksdag rose in October 1766, and with it the short-lived popularity of the Caps passed away. Summoned to power to heal the nation from the wounds inflicted upon it by nearly thirty years of Hat misrule, they had succeeded, in less than as many months, in convincing every one that the worst of the old abuses were infinitely better than the best remedies they could offer. They had forced the nation on the hard Procrustean bed of a merciless retrenchment; they had racked and twisted the body politic till every sinew was sore and every joint cried out, and by this drastic treatment had contrived to replenish, for a time, the empty treasury, but at the same time completely alienated the majority of their countrymen. Still, their domestic policy was, in the main, a commendable attempt to grapple with abuses against which they had always protested. Their vulnerable spot, the radical defect of their whole system, was their short-sighted and suicidal foreign policy.

Sweden was not then, as now, quite outside the European concert. Although no longer a great Power, she had still many of the responsibilities of a great Power; although

considerably depreciated, the Swedish alliance was still a marketable article. Her peculiar geographical position made her practically invulnerable for six months out of the twelve, whilst her Pomeranian possessions afforded her an easy ingress into the very heart of the moribund *Reich*, and her Finnish frontier was not many leagues from the Russian capital. A watchful neutrality, which would not venture much beyond defensive alliances and commercial treaties with the maritime Powers, was therefore Sweden's safest policy, and this the older Caps had always recognised and followed out. But when the Hats became the armour-bearers of France in the North, a protector strong enough to countervail French influence became the cardinal exigency of their opponents, the younger Caps; so without more ado they flung themselves into the arms of Russia, overlooking the fact that even a pacific union with Russia was more to be feared than a martial alliance with France. For France was too distant to be dangerous. She sought an ally in Sweden, and it was her endeavour to make that ally as strong as possible. But it was as a future prey, not as a possible confederate, that Russia regarded her ancient rival in the North. The iron sceptre of Peter the Great was now in the vigorous grasp of Catherine II., and it was the lifelong ambition of that unscrupulous Princess to degrade all her neighbours to the rank of tributary principalities. In the very treaty partitioning Poland there was a secret clause which engaged the contracting Powers to uphold the Swedish free Constitution as the swiftest and surest means of subverting Swedish independence, and an alliance with the credulous Caps *guaranteeing* their Constitution was the necessary corollary to this secret understanding. Thus, while the French alliance of the warlike Hats had destroyed the prestige of Sweden, the Russian alliance of the peaceful Caps threatened to destroy her very existence.

Friendship for the Caps and hatred of the Hats had been Gustavus's earliest sentiment, and this was only natural, for most of the friends of his childhood and boyhood had been Caps. But the scandalous way in which the Cap officers, during the Seven Years' War, had deserted their colours to flock to the Riksdag, so as to steal a march upon their opponents, had revolted his youthful ideas of honour and justice, "and from that time forth," he tells us in his diary, "I began to feel a contempt for a faction which sacrificed the interest of the State to party animosity." And as the Prince grew older, the brilliant personal qualities of the Hat leaders, most of them men of refined and cultivated tastes and fascinating manners, attracted him still more to their party. The leaders of the Caps, on the other hand, were not the sort of men to please or find pleasure in a Court which took Versailles for its model. They were nearly all hard-headed, matter-of-fact politicians, who measured everything by its money value, and regarded economy as the mother of the virtues. Gustaf Thure Rudbeck, their nominal leader, was universally respected for his incorruptible integrity, but it still remains a mystery how this narrow-minded, childishly credulous martinet could ever have become the standard-bearer of half the nation. Then there was the sour-visaged, sharp-tongued Serenius, Bishop of Strengnäs, a masterful, austere, aggressive nature, full of fierce zeal and destructive energy; Esbjörn Reuterholm, the fighting man of the party, with the principles of a republican and the courage of a fanatic; and finally, the still youthful Clas Frietzsky, a man of facts and figures, the financial oracle of the Caps. Frietzsky was no orator. He lacked fire and force; but he was a clear and cogent reasoner and an able and intrepid debater, with a genius for marshalling statistics which made him the terror of speculative finance ministers. Frietzsky, more-

over, was a man of singularly noble character, and it is recorded of him that he was the only politician of his day who was proof against all the blandishments of Gustavus III.

A common hatred—the strongest bond of union while it lasts—had united for a while the Hats and the Court against the Cap Government, and the course of events enabled them in a very few months to play a winning game.

The Cap financial reforms were well intentioned, and as they never had a fair trial, they cannot be judged on their merits; but, as is the way with all revolutionary measures, their immediate consequence was a deep and universal distress. From every corner of the land arose the complaint that trade was paralysed, credit destroyed, the money-market dislocated. The too hasty withdrawal of the depreciated paper money had at first trebled the value of the metallic currency, while the value of property sank in the same proportion. The price of land fell no less than 30 per cent. in twelve months. Landowners lately in affluence were unable to pay their mortgages. A bad harvest presently supervened, and thousands of peasants saw starvation staring them in the face. Yet, for all this, the Cap Government would not abate a jot of its program, and they affected to regard the distress which they could not deny as a providential visitation. The nation, they said, was now paying the just penalty of its past extravagance. The Estates had, no doubt, chosen a remedy which would make "the patient sweat for a time;" but it would prove an infallible cure in the long-run. So far from slackening the reins of government, the Caps only drew them tighter. The sumptuary laws, which played so important a part in the Cap system, were rigorously enforced. It was made penal to drink coffee or champagne

or to smoke tobacco, and the historian Botin narrowly escaped prosecution for wearing velvet sleeves to his coat. The nation naturally rebelled against this grandmotherly treatment, and from every printing-press in the country issued swarms of pamphlets and pasquils, which bit and stung the Cap Government, under the protection of the new press laws. The Senate retaliated by an order in Council (which the King refused to sign) declaring that all complaints against the measures of the last Riksdag should be punished with fine and imprisonment. The report of the College of Mines complaining of the distress in the iron districts was designated as a libel against the Senate. But complaints against the Government only waxed louder and fiercer. "We have liberty of the press," it was said, "but not liberty of speech!"

The Hat Court league now judged it opportune to make their first move. On February 9, 1768, the King, followed by the Crown Prince, entered the council-chamber, and Gustavus, on behalf of his father, read a short message urging the Raad to instantly convoke a Riksdag as the only available means of relieving the national distress. The Raad, after a week's reflection, informed his Majesty that it saw no reason for departing from the prescription of the last Riksdag, which had fixed October 1770 for the convocation of its successor. The King thereupon declared that he held the Senate responsible for all the inconveniences which might arise from not summoning the Estates, and there for a time the matter rested. In September of the same year, Gustavus undertook a three weeks' tour of inspection through the Dales, the centre of the Swedish iron industry, and, after sifting the grievances of the people and thoroughly ingratiating himself with the hardy miners, returned to the capital laden with petitions for the speedy convocation of a Riksdag. While he had been so

well employing his time, the Senate had come to logger-heads with its own officers. It was a peculiar feature of the political situation that while the Raad was Cap, most of the heads of departments were Hat ; for the Caps, who had been in opposition for thirty years, were naturally obliged to put up with the experienced Hat civil servants they found in office, till they themselves had been in power long enough to train up a staff of officials of their own way of thinking. But a Cap Senate and Hat Colleges (as the Government Departments were called) could not work together long without some friction, and a very trumpery affair now brought them into actual collision.

A certain Captain Cronacker claimed a small estate which had come into the possession of the crown. The Reduction Riksdag, to whom he preferred his claim, decided that the crown ought to compensate Cronacker. The Kammer Kollegium, or Court of Domains, accordingly proceeded to value the estate, with the view to a settlement ; but Cronacker's demands proved so exorbitant that the matter was referred to the Senate. The Senate decided in Cronacker's favour. The College protested, and the Senate, affecting to regard this act of insubordination as high-treason at the very least, impeached the whole College before an extraordinary tribunal appointed on the spur of the moment for that express purpose. The King warmly protested against such an abuse of justice, and refused to sign the decree constituting the new tribunal, whereupon the Senate stamped its own decree with the royal name-stamp and issued it in his Majesty's name.

It was now that the long-suffering monarch, sure of the support of the Hat Colleges and encouraged by the arrival of the new French ambassador, M. de Modène, with a full purse, played his trump card. On the 9th December, all the confederates met together in the Queen's private room,

when the following plan was agreed upon. The King, accompanied by the Crown Prince, was to appear in the council-chamber and once more urge the Raad to convoke the Estates. In case of refusal, he was to solemnly declare that he abdicated the throne and held the Senate responsible for the evils of an interregnum. At the same time an effort was made to bind the hands of the Hat leaders, the French Minister extorting from them a written promise to restore the ancient prerogatives of the crown as soon as they had the power. Three days afterwards the King, followed by the Crown Prince, entered the council-chamber, and again Gustavus on his father's behalf read aloud a royal message, which, after alluding to the distress of the nation and the apathy of the Senate, thus proceeded: "All this has filled my heart with the sorrow and concern which a tender father must always feel for the sufferings of his children. Such universal distress can only be removed by the interposition of the sovereign Estates, whose speedy convocation I therefore once more demand"—here Gustavus broke off and maliciously looked round. All the senators were reclining at their ease in their velvet fauteuils, placidly regarding the speaker with a calm and confident superciliousness. They had heard the same story once before. But just as Senator Friesendorff rose to reply, the Prince suddenly resumed his document, and throwing into the peroration of the royal message all the fire and feeling of which he was capable, thus concluded: "If, contrary to my expectations, your Excellencies still refuse to summon a Riksdag . . . I renounce the burden of a government which the tears of countless sufferers and the daily dilapidation of the realm render altogether intolerable, reserving the right to fully explain to my trusty councillors, the Estates of the realm, whensoever they assemble, the reasons which have induced me in the meantime to abdicate the

crown, and I forbid the Senate in the meantime to employ my name in any of their resolutions." The consternation produced by this unexpected peroration was indescribable. The simpering faces of the Senators were suddenly transformed with mingled rage, astonishment, and embarrassment. But his Majesty, without condescending to bandy words with them, gave them three days for reflection and then abruptly quitted the room. During the three days' grace, the Raad held many anxious deliberations. At first they were inclined to yield, but a conference with the Russian ambassador, with whom they were closeted the whole night before the final struggle, gave them heart again. On December 11, the King and his eldest son again repaired to the "Sacred College," as Gustavus ironically called the Senate. At the last moment indeed, the King's courage began to give way, but the Queen exhorted him to be firm, and fortifying himself with a glass of Tokay, he hastened whither duty called him. The royal personages were no sooner seated than the Raad's reply to the royal message was read. Evasive in substance, though polite in form, it begged for further time for reflection, and implored his Majesty, in the name of the Most High, to withdraw his abdication and continue to gladden the hearts of his dutiful subjects with the blessings of his august rule. The King at once replied that he could only regard the answer of the Raad as a rejection of his demands, and that therefore he would cease from that moment to take any part in the government of the realm till the Estates met again. With these words he rose to quit the apartment, while the Senators fell down on their knees and besought him in the most abject terms to reconsider his determination. The weakly good-natured Frederick Adolphus vacillated and was on the point of yielding, but Gustavus reminding him in a whisper of his promise to the Queen, threw open the fold-

ing doors and dragged rather than led his father from the room. This was more than Senator Ribbing could endure, and forgetting in his rage the respect due to the royal family, he bawled down the staircase after the Crown Prince, "It is that d——d young thief who has spoiled everything!"

Gustavus had no sooner quitted the council-chamber than he entered his carriage, and, surrounded by a huzzaing crowd, repaired to all the public offices in turn to announce to them his Majesty's abdication. On his way he scattered broadcast printed copies of the royal declaration, and used all his natural eloquence to exalt the patriotism of a King "who had descended from the throne to save his people."

From December 15 to December 21, 1768, Sweden was without a legal government. The capital was much disturbed. Crowds of people surrounded the palace, where the Senate passed the time in anxious deliberation, issuing orders in the King's name, which were no longer obeyed, the Colleges refusing to accept the name-stamp as a substitute for the sign-manual of the King. On December 17, a deputation from most of the public offices, headed by their presidents, marched in solemn procession to the palace, where they demanded an audience of the Senate, and declared that they could no longer exercise their functions without violating the Constitution. They then waited upon the ex-King, and humbly thanked him for his fatherly sympathy with his suffering people. Their example was followed on the 19th by the magistracy of Stockholm. Still the Senate, strong in the support of the Russian and Danish Ministers, showed no sign of wavering. But when the Treasury refused to part with a single shilling more, when Fersen, as commander of the guard, appeared in the council-chamber and declared he could no longer answer for his troops, the stubborn resistance of the Caps was broken at last, and, at

the eleventh hour, they reluctantly and ungraciously gave way. On the 19th it was resolved to convoke the Estates for the 19th April 1769. On the 21st Adolphus Frederick reappeared in the council-chamber and resumed the crown.

Both parties now prepared for the elections which were to decide whether the nation preferred to be governed by a King or a name-stamp. On the eve of the contest there was a general assembly of the Hats at the French embassy, where the Count de Modène furnished them with 6,000,000 livres, but not till they had signed in his presence an undertaking to reform the Constitution in a monarchical sense. Spain, too, at the instigation of France, endeavoured to win the neutrality of Denmark by offering her free trade to the Spanish Antilles. Still more energetic was Russia on the other side. The Russian ambassador, Osterman, became the treasurer as well as the counsellor of the Caps, and scattered the largesse of the Tsarina with a lavish hand; and so lost to all sense of patriotism were the Caps, that they threatened all who dared to vote against them with the Muscovite vengeance, and fixed Norrköping, instead of Stockholm, as the place of meeting for the Riksdag, because it was more accessible to the Russian fleet, which was being fitted out at Cronstadt to assist them in case of need. But it soon became evident that the Caps were playing a losing game, and when the Riksdag met at Norrköping on April 19th, they found themselves in a minority in all four Estates. In the contest for the marshalate of the Diet, the leaders of the two parties were again pitted against each other, and the verdict of the last Riksdag was exactly reversed, Fersen defeating Rudbeck by 234, though Russia spent no less than £11,500 to secure the election of the latter.

But in the very flush of their triumph the Hat-Court league now had a terrible scare. Of all the Hat leaders,

Pechlin had most obstinately refused to lend himself to any revision of the Constitution, and as without his co-operation, or at least connivance, the thing was impossible, the confederates were in despair. It was then that the Queen committed the incredible folly of placing in the arch-traitor's hands the list containing the names of all those who had pledged themselves to extend the prerogative, so that Pechlin might see how strong the Court party really was. Pechlin expressed himself satisfied, but retained the list on some pretext or other until the Riksdag met, when he suddenly threatened to go over to the Caps with the compromising document unless he immediately received £11,000 as hush-money, and this enormous bribe the confederates were too terrified to refuse his rapacity.

The first act of the Riksdag was to move a humble address of thanks to the King "because he had not shut his ears to the bitter cry of the nation," and to the Crown Prince for his patriotic zeal. Pechlin, with sublime impudence, seconded the motion. "In the conduct of the royal family," said he, "I recognise the illustrious Gustavian race, which has always led the way in everything tending to promote the national welfare." The Caps had short shrift, and the joint note which the Russian, Prussian, and Danish Ministers presented to the Estates, protesting, in menacing terms, against any "reprisals" on the part of the triumphant faction, only hastened the fall of the Government. The Cap Senate resigned *en masse* to escape impeachment, and neither the temperate Frietzsky nor the caustic Serenius could prevent the majority of the Riksdag from appointing an exclusively Hat Ministry. On June 1 the Reaction Riksdag, as it is generally called, removed to the capital, to be beyond the reach of a Russian fleet, and it was now that the French ambassador and the Crown Prince called upon the new Senators to redeem their promise as to a

reform of the Constitution which they had made before the elections. But when Fersen and his colleagues, at the fag-end of the session, reluctantly and half-heartedly, brought the matter forward, the Riksdag suddenly seemed stricken with paralysis. Impediments, not unwelcome to the leading party chiefs, multiplied at every step, while the infamous Pechlin suddenly went over to the Cap opposition, raised the cry, "The Constitution is in danger!" and in a month succeeded in completely breaking up the majority. On January 30, 1770, the Reaction Riksdag, after a barren ten months' session, rose amidst the most chaotic confusion. No previous Swedish Parliament had broken so many solemn pledges and lost so many golden opportunities. "That we should have lost the Constitutional battle does not distress me so much," wrote Gustavus in the bitterness of his heart; "in our present circumstances, a new Constitution would have been of little service to us. But what *does* dismay me is to see my own nation so sunk in corruption as to place its whole felicity in absolute anarchy."

CHAPTER V.

GUSTAVUS TAKES PARIS BY STORM.

Gustavus's longing to see Paris—His admiration of Voltaire—His visit to Paris a political mission as well as a pleasure trip—Fall of the Duc de Choiseul—Abolition of the Parliament of Paris—Flattering reception of Gustavus at Court—His popularity in the town—His opinion of the philosophers—The ladies compare him to Henry IV.—He shines in the *salons*—Madame du Deffand praises him to Horace Walpole—Death of King Frederick Adolphus—Midnight interview of Carl Scheffer with Louis XV.—Louis XV. aroused to give active help to Sweden—Vergennes appointed Ambassador to Stockholm—Brilliant social and political success of Gustavus's visit to Paris—His departure—Visits his uncle, Frederick the Great, at Potsdam—Mutual antipathy—Frederick's opinion of Swedish politics.

IN the first effusion of its gratitude to the Crown Prince, the Reaction Riksdag had voted him a large sum of money for a foreign tour, and it was towards Paris that all Gustavus's thoughts and hopes were now directed. Ever since he had begun to think at all, he had intensely longed to see that great city, and Count Creutz, the brilliant and amiable Swedish Minister at the Court of Versailles, whose *salon* competed with the *salons* of Madame Geoffrin and Madame du Deffand at their prime, had long been the channel of intercourse between Gustavus and the leaders of Parisian thought. Not an epigram of the patriarch of Ferney saw the light but it was instantly sent to Stockholm with the political dispatches, and Creutz also sent each volume of the Encyclopedia to Gustavus as it came out. Voltaire, ever insatiable of praise, seems to have

received the homage of Gustavus with much the same childish delight with which, forty years before, he had received the homage of Gustavus's uncle, the great Frederick. The old man shed tears of joy when Creutz told him that the Crown Prince of Sweden knew the *Henriade* by heart before he was sixteen. "It is true," he cried, "that I meant it to be a lesson for kings, but I never expected that it would have borne fruit in the North." Hume, too, whom Creutz met at Paris, expressed a lively desire to see a young Prince who preferred abstruse philosophy to "the offspring of tinselled frivolity!" Marmontel, through the same intermediary, sent Gustavus a copy of his *Belisarius*, dedicated the *Incas* to him, and became his most enthusiastic correspondent. Thus the name of Gustavus was familiar to the French *litterati*, and his arrival was looked forward to with great interest. It would be a mistake, however, to imagine that his visit to the French capital was a mere pleasure trip; it was also to be a political mission. Confidential agents from the Swedish Court had already prepared the way for him, and the French premier, the Duc de Choiseul, weary of Swedish anarchy, had resolved to discuss with the Crown Prince of Sweden the best method of bringing about a revolution. On November 8, 1770, Gustavus,¹ accompanied by his younger brother, Frederick, Count Carl Scheffer, and a small suite, quitted Stockholm, and, after paying short visits at Copenhagen (where he was much disgusted by the tawdriness of the Danish Court and the insolence of Struensee), Hamburg, Brunswick, and several smaller Courts, reached Paris on February 4, 1771.

The arrival of Gustavus coincided with two extraordinary events, which had set all Paris in commotion. The Duc de Choiseul, who for the last ten years had ruled

¹ He travelled under the name of Count of Gothland.

France with vigour and address at home, and restored to her something of her old prestige abroad, had fallen the victim of a palace intrigue, and been summarily dismissed to his estate at Chanteloup by a *lettre-de-cachet* of classical brevity.¹ A month later, the old King, roused for a moment from his voluptuous ease by the insinuations of his new Ministers, violently removed the last barrier to royal despotism by abolishing the Parliament of Paris. This tyrannical outburst had provoked universal irritation. Philosophers and princes of the blood, the *salons* and the populace, had ranged themselves on the side of the vanquished. Choiseul became the hero of the day, and all Paris flocked to Chanteloup to pay its respects to the fallen Minister. The fall of Choiseul was a serious blow to the hopes of the Swedish Court. Prudence might even have counselled the Prince Royal to avoid his old supporter; but ingratitude was no vice of Gustavus's, and one of the first visits he paid was to the fallen Minister. At the same time he lost no opportunity of conciliating the powers that were. His reception at court was most flattering. Louis XV. treated the young Princes as if they were his own children, and during their stay at Marly they were lodged in "les appartements des enfants de France," a rare distinction. Gustavus was favourably impressed by the members of the royal family. "The Dauphin," he wrote to his father, "is about my own height. He speaks but little, but what he does say is to the point. The Dauphine is of a very agreeable appearance." Gustavus also found his way to the fairy palace of Louviciennes, where Madame du Barry, the most beautiful and the most

¹ It contained these words: "Mon cousin, le mécontentement que j'ai de vos services me force à vous exiler à Chanteloup, où vous vous rendrez dans les vingt-quatre heures."

abandoned of Louis XV.'s many mistresses, reigned supreme. The Prince had as poor an opinion of this lady's intelligence as of her virtue; but the favourite sultana could not safely be neglected, and he easily won the heart of the good-natured harlot by presenting her favourite poodle with a diamond collar.¹

The town was every whit as pleased with Gustavus as the Court. Every one admired the *savoir-faire* of the young Hyperborean, who had all the graces of an old *habitué* of the *Œil-de-Bœuf*. French society had now attained its highest development. It had acquired that exquisite if superficial perfection which led Talleyrand to exclaim regretfully in his old age that he who had not lived before 1789 knew not what life was. In that brilliant firmament the youthful Gustavus shone as a star of the first magnitude. The *hôtel* of the Swedish legation became, for the nonce, the favourite resort of the rank and talent of France. Scheffer and Creutz had already exhibited their charge to the admiring Paris *salons*, while the royal historiographer, Rulhière, had introduced him to the philosophers; indeed, the interview which he actually brought about between the brilliant Prince and the misanthropical recluse Rousseau was everywhere regarded as a triumph of tact and management. It is interesting to learn that Rousseau, despite strong prejudices, was greatly impressed by Gustavus's phenomenal facility and subtlety of apprehension. Voltaire Gustavus never saw, unforeseen events preventing his intended pilgrimage to Ferney; but he energetically defended "the holy man" against the Maréchal de Broglie, and was rewarded by a complimentary ode from the aged poet. D'Alembert also received the most striking proofs of the Prince's attention,

¹ Hence Maria Theresa: "On raconte ici [Vienna] des bassesses du Roi de Suède vis-à-vis de cette femme [Du Barry]. Quelle honte!"

and a bodyguard of Encyclopedists accompanied the royal visitor wherever he went. Gustavus seems to have received the homage of the poets and the philosophers with a captivating grace which won all hearts, but his correspondence with his mother shows that he was by no means blind to their faults. "I have already," he says, "made the acquaintance of all the philosophers, and their writings are much more agreeable than their persons. It is strange that Marmontel's conversation should have so little of the easy gaiety of his stories; 'tis an energumen who discourses with much enthusiasm, and the greatest republican possible. My dear mother will readily understand that 'tis only to her I dare say such things; one would scarcely venture to think as much here; 'twould be a frightful blasphemy which would for ever compromise me. . . . Grimm is more amiable [than Marmontel], but more reserved. Thomas speaks as emphatically as he writes; but they all possess what appears to me a revolting foible: they sing their own praises with as much complacency as ever their admirers could do."

Nor were the ladies less appreciative than the philosophers. All the distinguished women who then gave the tone to Parisian society testified to the superlative merits of the Prince Royal of Sweden. With many of them he afterwards maintained a life-long correspondence. He was equally at home in the Rue St. Dominique, where Madame du Deffand made the great world forget that she was old and blind, and in the rival *salon* of the Rue de Bellechasse, where Mademoiselle Lespinasse kept house with D'Alembert, and found a compensation for the lack of beauty, birth, and fortune in the homage of all the poets and philosophers of the age. With Creutz and Scheffer he made his pilgrimage to St. Ouen, where the angelic Madame Necker preached virtue and benevolence to a society in the throes of moral

dissolution, and swelled the brilliant circle in which the gay and gallant Madame Epinay discoursed moral philosophy to her numerous lovers. In the *salon of salons*, too, the *salon* of Madame Geoffrin, so justly accounted one of the institutions of the eighteenth century, Gustavus was a frequent and honoured guest. To some of his fair friends his noble bearing and graceful manners recalled all that tradition had recorded of Francis I. and Henry IV., the beaux-ideals of French chivalry, and they agreed with the artists that his physiognomy was that of a great man.¹ Even the aristarchian Madame du Deffand grows unusually benign when she refers to Gustavus. "I am persuaded," she wrote to Horace Walpole, "that this Prince would please you. One cannot imagine greater ease, gaiety, tact, and politeness."

But this "delightful dream," as Gustavus himself has called it, was to have a rude awakening. On March 1, 1771, a special courier from Stockholm reached Paris with the news of the death of King Adolphus Frederick. The suddenness of the catastrophe had given rise, at first, to ugly rumours; but in the ingredients with which the deceased monarch had overloaded a weak stomach was to be found the only poison that killed him. Gustavus was in the Countess of Egmont's box at the opera when a message from Creutz first informed him that his royal father was no more. He at once dispatched Carl Scheffer to Versailles to break the news to the French King, and hastened back to the Swedish legation, where he remained for the next four days in the strictest seclusion, a prey to the most poignant grief, as he had dearly loved his gentle and indulgent parent.

Meanwhile, Scheffer was on his way to Versailles. It was past eleven o'clock when he reached the château. The

¹ The celebrated painter Pierre was especially struck by the play of his eyebrows.

guards refused at first to open the gates at that hour to the Swedish diplomatist, and it was only by golden arguments that he succeeded in forcing his way into the royal antechamber. Aroused from his repose by the unusual rumbling of a carriage in the Place d'Armes, and being informed that a special envoy from Sweden demanded an audience, the curiosity of Louis XV. got the better of his indignation, and Scheffer was admitted. It is the only instance on record of his Most Christian Majesty having given an audience to a foreign Minister at midnight, and in his dressing-gown.

Scheffer informed Louis XV. of the death of Adolphus Frederick, and drew such a vivid picture of the helplessness of Sweden without the prompt aid of France, that the King was, for once, thoroughly roused from his lethargic indolence. The very next day, the Finance Minister received the royal command to provide the means of paying the first instalment of a new subsidy treaty with Sweden, and the Minister of Marine was instructed at the same time to offer his Swedish Majesty the assistance of a French fleet in the Baltic. The latter offer Gustávus prudently declined, as only tending to precipitate the rupture with Russia which he was anxious to avoid, but the financial assistance of the French Court was thankfully accepted. Creutz subsequently received from the Minister of Foreign Affairs a memorandum by which France undertook to pay the outstanding subsidies to Sweden unconditionally, at the rate of one and a half million livres annually, commencing from January 1772; and the Count de Vergennes, one of the great names of French diplomacy,¹ whose wary resoluteness had, for the last thirteen years, held Russia in check at Constantinople,

¹ Choiseul had a high opinion of Vergennes' diplomatic talent. "If I asked him to-morrow for the head of the Grand Vizier," said he, "he would reply that it was a dangerous undertaking, but he would send the head all the same."

was to be sent as ambassador to Stockholm to circumvent her designs there also. At Gustavus's farewell interview with the old King, a few days later, Louis promised his young cousin 300,000 livres with which to manage the Riksdag, and counselled prudence and moderation. Vergennes' instructions were to the same effect, and Gustavus was to co-operate with him in all things.

It was with feelings of unmixed satisfaction that Gustavus could now return to his own country. Both socially and politically his visit to Paris had been a great success. In Louis XV. he had won a warm friend, and without neglecting the fallen Choiseul, he had ingratiated himself with his rival and ultimate successor, the Duc d'Aiguillon. He had settled once for all the long-pending subsidy question, and actually quitted Paris with a considerable instalment in his pocket. Finally, he had charmed the philosophers without disgusting the pietists; he had delighted the men of letters with his learning and the men of pleasure with his wit, and he had converted the leading personages of all parties into enthusiastic admirers, who trumpeted the praises of the royal philosopher throughout Europe. "Such a prestige," it has been well said, "was at that time of great service to a monarch; the Parisian hall-mark guaranteed the genius of a king both within and without his own realm."

Finally, on 25th March 1771, regretfully and regretted, Gustavus quitted Paris for his native land. He had previously been counselled by the Swedish Senate to pay his uncle, the Great Frederick, a visit, as that potentate had been led to believe by the Cap opposition that the new King of Sweden meditated mischief. So Gustavus deemed it prudent to pass through Potsdam on his way home, and was received with great distinction but little cordiality. It was the first time he had ever seen his renowned rela-

tive, and it was also to be the last. Neither of the Kings was quite at ease with the other. Frederick seems already to have foreseen a rival in his nephew, and Gustavus was little pleased with the reflections on things Swedish which formed the staple of his uncle's conversation. European politics were freely discussed. Frederick bluntly informed Gustavus that, in concert with Russia and Denmark, he had guaranteed the integrity of the existing Swedish Constitution, and was prepared to defend it by force of arms even against his own nephew. Yet he frankly admitted that Gustavus would find it no easy task to rule a nation so divided against itself. "If there were Swedes in Sweden," said the veteran statesman, "they would soon agree to bury their differences; but foreign corruption has so perverted the national spirit that harmony is impossible." With singular inconsistency, he then advised the young monarch to play the part of mediator and abstain from violence. Gustavus hastened to assure his uncle that though it was the wish of his heart to reconcile the Swedish factions, he had no designs upon the Swedish Constitution, and Frederick was so satisfied with his assurances that he did not hesitate to inform Catherine II. that the tranquillity of the North had nothing to fear from the new King of Sweden.

CHAPTER VI.

"THE FIRST CITIZEN OF A FREE PEOPLE."

The new elections. favour the Caps—Arrival of Gustavus at Stockholm—The "beggar-audiences"—The King mediates between the factions—The Composition Committee—Election of the Land-marshal and the Talmen—Daring manœuvre of Gustavus—Opening of the Riksdag—The speech from the throne—Extraordinary but transient enthusiasm—The King's first collision with the Estates—Growing hostility between noble and non-noble deputies—Revolutionary demands of the three lower Estates—Obstinate resistance of the nobility—Parliamentary deadlock—Impatience of the Foreign Ministers—Watchful neutrality of the King—He offers to mediate between the Estates—His interview with the four Presidents—Opposition of the Talman of the Burgesses—The new coronation-oath finally passes through all four Estates—Attack of the three lower Estates upon the Hat Senate—Fierce debates in the Upper House—Final overthrow and dismissal of the Hats—The new Cap Senate—Despair of the King—He resolves to bring about a revolution to save the country.

MEANWHILE, in Sweden itself, the arrival of the young King was awaited with feverish impatience. The elections on the demise of the Crown had resulted in a partial victory for the Caps, especially among the lower orders; but in the Estate of Peasants their majority was very small, while the mass of the nobility was dead against them. Nothing could be done, however, till the King came, and every one felt that with Gustavus a new and entirely incalculable factor had entered into Swedish politics. His abilities were now universally recognised, and inspired equal hope and fear; the rumoured success

of his mysterious mission to France (for it was a mystery to most people) naturally tending to increase his importance still more.

It was not till June 6, 1771, that the young King entered his capital. He was greeted with the enthusiasm to be expected of a people that had always loved its Kings, and with the new monarch the by-gone age of paternal sovereignty and filial subjection seemed about to return once more. On the very day after his arrival, advertisements in the daily press informed the public that his Majesty had fixed Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays as reception days, on which all classes of his Majesty's dutiful subjects might have the opportunity of presenting their petitions and other complaints to him personally between four and five in the afternoon. On the appointed days the palace was thronged by crowds of every party, rank, age, and sex. They came curious and expectant, they departed surprised and fascinated. There was absolutely no resisting the young monarch. He listened with the most exemplary patience to the garrulous griefs of the meanest of his subjects. He bestowed favours as if he were receiving them. He entered as minutely into the private affairs of his visitors as if they were his own. To some he gave money,¹ to others he gave advice; nobody went away without something, even if it were no more than a friendly smile or a sympathetic word. The whole city went mad with enthusiasm. To have seen the King and pressed his hand was esteemed the height of felicity, and the press lauded him to the skies as the mirror of princes.

The impressionable nature of Gustavus was much affected by the facility of his triumph, and the first use he proposed

¹ Hence the Caps derisively termed these receptions the "Beggaraudiences."

to make of his popularity was to reconcile the jarring factions. It was a noble ambition, and there is no good reason to doubt that it was perfectly sincere.¹ Within a week of his arrival at Stockholm, he summoned Fersen to the palace ; submitted a mediation scheme to his consideration, and frankly invited his co-operation. But the experienced and disillusioned party-leader shook his head. He despaired, he said, of bringing back in a moment to the path of virtue and patriotism a people who had been running riot for more than half a century in the wilderness of political license and corruption, and he strongly dissuaded the enthusiastic young monarch from any such Quixotic attempt. But Gustavus overwhelmed him with so many fresh arguments, and seasoned his arguments with so much delicate flattery, that Fersen at last consented to open negotiations with the Caps, and ultimately a Composition Committee, consisting of Fersen and two Hats and Pechlin and two Caps, was formed to arrange terms. But this Composition Committee proved illusory from the very first. The Cap party as a whole, and the Russian and English Ministers, from whom the Caps took their cue, regarded the plan as a ruse on the King's part to save the Hat Senate from well-merited chastisement, and the meetings of the Committee were irregular, stormy, and barren. The demands of the Caps were preposterous, and their language was insolent. Pechlin seemed bent upon breaking up the Composition project altogether, and the King had to interfere to prevent an actual collision between him and Fersen. Still more dictatorial became the tone of the Russian faction when its nominees were, after a severe struggle, elected talmen or speakers of the three lower Estates. This threefold defeat had the usual de-

¹ With the Fersen Memoirs and the Gustavan Papers before us, it is impossible to maintain, with Fryxell and Sheridan, that Gustavus was insincere.

moralising effect on the vanquished. Crowds of deserters passed over into the ranks of the Caps, who forthwith proceeded, under every imaginable pretext, to invalidate the elections of their most dangerous opponents. In this way the Caps obtained a decisive majority in the three lower Orders, and consequently became the masters of the Legislature.

The King, however, was determined to make a stand for the land-marshalate or speakership of the nobility. Want of money had been the chief cause of the collapse of the Hats in the three lower Estates. The King had based all his operations on the funds which he expected to receive on the arrival of the new French ambassador. Vergennes, delayed weeks behind his time by the vile German roads, did not reach Stockholm till June 8th, and when he did arrive, his friends discovered, to their no small consternation, that he was almost empty-handed. Gustavus was now in a serious dilemma. It was absolutely necessary to snatch the Riddarhus or House of Nobles from the grasp of the triumphant Caps. If the nobility were lost, all was lost. Yet lost it must be without money, and no money was forthcoming. It was then that Gustavus hit upon a desperate expedient. Without so much as consulting the French Government or its ambassador, he drew upon the Dutch banking-house of Horneca for £200,000 on the sole security of the first instalment of the French subsidy, which was not due till January 1, 1772. It was a hazardous game to contract such a debt, which he had no means of repaying, on a security which at any moment might be repudiated; but there was much of the venturesomeness of the gamester about Gustavus III., and he never played so well as when the game was risky and the stakes ruinous. With this sum of money in hand, he managed to score the first victory which the Court party had yet won. In the

contest for the baton of the marshal of the Diet, the royal nominee, Baron Lejonhufvud, defeated the Cap leader, Rudbeck, by 524 to 450. This unexpected check depressed the Caps considerably, and the Composition Committee suddenly became more open to reason. Articles of composition were even drawn up, whereby five Hats were to retire from the Senate to make room for five Caps, the Caps undertaking in return not to re-open the vexed question of the legality of the last Riksdag. The King and Fersen were also in favour of introducing a clause interdicting bribery in the future; but, as Pechlin could not answer for his colleagues on this point, it was abandoned.

The King could now meet the Estates with a light heart. On June 21, 1771, Gustavus in full regalia, and with the silver sceptre of Gustavus Adolphus in his hand, formally opened his first Parliament in a speech which awakened strange and deep emotions in all who heard it. It was the first time for more than a century that a Swedish King had addressed a Swedish Riksdag from the throne in its native language.

After a touching allusion to his father's death, the orator thus proceeded: "Born and bred among you, I have learned, from my tenderest youth, to love my country, and hold it the highest privilege to be born a Swede, the greatest honour to be the *first citizen of a free people*. All my desires are satisfied when the prosperity of the realm is promoted, its independence established, its honour confirmed by your deliberations. To rule over a happy people is my dearest desire, to govern a free people the highest aim of my ambition. Do not fancy, my good Swedes, that these are but empty words. I express what my heart feels, a heart burning with the liveliest affection for all that is honourable and patriotic; a heart too proud to promise what it cannot perform, too sincere to say what

it does not mean. I have seen many lands. I have studied the sentiments, the institutions, the habits and customs, the material and the spiritual resources of many peoples. I have found that neither the pomp and magnificence of monarchy, neither the most frugal economy nor the most overflowing exchequer, can ensure content or prosperity where patriotism, where unity is wanting. It rests with you, therefore, to become the happiest nation in the world. Let this Riksdag be for ever memorable in our annals for the sacrifice of all party animosities, of all interested motives, to the common weal. So far as in me lies, I will contribute to reunite your diverging opinions, to reconcile your estranged affections, so that the nation may for ever look back with gratitude on a Parliament on whose deliberations I now invoke the blessing of the Most High!"

This noble eirenicon, delivered with all the dramatic skill of a consummate actor, produced the most extraordinary effect. If the placid Fersen, himself a practised orator, was astonished and delighted, we can well believe that the whole assembly was moved to tears. It was unanimously resolved, by all four Estates, that the royal address should forthwith be printed in Swedish, German, and Finnish; that it should be circulated at the public expense throughout the land, and that a copy of it, framed and illuminated, should be preserved as a memorial in every parish church in the realm. Old men who still remembered Charles XII. with fond regret, exclaimed that they might die in peace now that they had heard Gustavus III. A masterly translation of the speech by Carl Scheffer appeared in the *Gazette de France*, and took all Paris by storm. In Germany also it was read with enthusiastic admiration.

Unfortunately, this fine spurt of enthusiasm exhausted itself in less than a week. A few days after the speech

from the throne, the elections to the Secret Committee were held. The 12th article of the Composition provided that, in future, each Order should choose at least a third of its delegates to the Committee from the ranks of the minority. The Estates now had it in their power to render their country and their King an inestimable service. The Hats preponderated in the Order of Nobles, the Caps in the Order of Priests and the Order of Burgesses.¹ If both parties had loyally carried out the 12th article of the composition, the Secret Committee would have been equally divided between Hats and Caps, and the spirit of party persecution might have been effectually laid. But the patriotism of the factions was unequal even to this puny act of self-denial. The Order of Burgesses ostentatiously repudiated the contract by selecting twenty-five Caps to represent them in the Committee. The Order of Priests followed suit. The Nobility at once retaliated by sending up forty-six Hats and only four Caps. The lower Estates now had a majority in the Committee sufficient to outvote their noble colleagues. This was another Russian victory, but it cost the Tsarina more than £40,000.

The first step of Gustavus in the path of conciliation had thus been anything but encouraging; the second step was actually to bring him into violent collision with the very men whose "estranged affections" he was so anxious to reconcile. We have seen how Gustavus had pledged his royal word to give the Caps at least five places in the Senate. Two of these places were now vacant, and when General Klingspor moved in the Riddarhus that Count Adam Horn and Baron Kalling, the two eldest of the Cap senators, who had been dismissed in 1769, should now be reinstated, the motion was warmly supported by the King's friends and carried unanimously. But the lower Orders

¹ The Peasants had, as yet, no seats in the Committee.

were not satisfied with this. Klingspor's motion was not half strong enough for them.

They introduced an amendment to the effect that the letters-patent creating the new senators should expressly affirm that these noblemen had regained the confidence of the nation, "in consequence of notorious circumstances recently brought to light." Now such an amendment at such a time was both impolitic and indecent. It revived unpleasant memories; it reflected upon the conduct of the late King, and it claimed from the present King as a matter of right what he regarded as an act of grace. Every one knew that want of respect towards his late Majesty was one of the chief reasons why the Cap senators had been dismissed, and both Adolphus Frederick and his son had been publicly thanked by the Estates on that occasion. Gustavus, therefore, naturally refused to sign the letters-patent containing the offensive phrase when they were laid before him. "Surely," he said, "my subjects do not desire me to violate the law of God and the law of nature by casting aspersions on my own father!" In vain did the Senate represent to his Majesty the danger of running counter to the will of the Estates. Gustavus was inflexible, and the Raad, greatly perplexed, finally referred the matter back to the Riksdag.

This sudden display of resolution from the crown was something quite new and unexpected. The dominant faction was profoundly irritated. A fierce flame of hostility to what was called the pretensions of the King flared up in all four Estates. His Majesty's conduct was seriously treated as a gross breach of the Constitution. Still Gustavus persisted in his refusal to sign. When his friends, alarmed at the serious turn things were taking, implored him no longer to defy the authority of the Riksdag, he only replied that he was not yet sufficiently

enamoured of his crown to feel the loss of it. There now seemed to be only one expedient left, the employment of the odious name-stamp. Fortunately, Gustavus was spared this crowning humiliation. The Russian ambassador, himself alarmed at the violence of his own party, brought about a compromise. The objectionable clause was, indeed, suffered to remain, but its meaning was explained away, and all parties professed themselves satisfied.

Gustavus was now desirous of terminating as soon as possible a Riksdag from which he had evidently little to hope and everything to fear. The Estates had been summoned ostensibly to bury his father and crown himself. One half of their work had, therefore, already been done. It only remained for them to prepare the royal assurance or coronation oath for the King's signature, and accordingly the Parliament now received a gentle hint from Gustavus to expedite matters. A royal message informed the Secret Committee that his Majesty had fixed the 24th September for his coronation, and had determined, for the sake of economy, to be crowned in the capital instead of at Upsala, as prescribed by ancient custom. The Estates, in reply, humbly thanked his Majesty for his fatherly solicitude, but at the same time sharply forbade the Senate to advertise the coronation till the royal assurance had been signed. In fact, the Ofrålse majority in the Riksdag considered that it was now high time to break away from the leading-strings of their noble chiefs. They were shrewd enough to see that the coronation oath was their trump card, and they determined to make the most of it. Accordingly, a special commission, consisting of sixteen members of the Secret Committee and fourteen Peasants, was appointed to frame a new coronation oath, and in a month it was ready with a draft which the lower Orders regarded with ecstasy,

but which filled both the King and the nobility with indignation and dismay. And indeed this draft contained three clauses which could only be described as revolutionary. The first of these clauses bound the King to reign *uninterruptedly*! The Caps had not forgotten the embarrassing consequences of an abdication in the past, and were for making an abdication in the future impossible. Gustavus, on the other hand, could not be expected to regard with equanimity a proviso which robbed him of the right of renouncing the crown the moment that crown became intolerable. The second clause bound the King to abide by the decision, not of "the Estates of the realm altogether," as heretofore, but simply of "the Estates of the realm," *i.e.*, a majority of the Estates. This clause, in the event of the lower Orders acting in unison, would, of course, enable them to rule without, and even in spite of, the Nobility. But the most sweeping innovation was contained in the third clause, which required his Majesty, in all cases of preferment, to be guided "*solely*" by merit—in all former coronation oaths the word "*principally*" had been used. This clause struck at the very root of aristocratic privilege by placing Frälse (noble) and Ofrälse (non-noble) on precisely the same footing. The Nobility rightly regarded this document as a direct challenge from the lower Orders. Even the cautious Fersen described it as an act of spoliation. The strife of Hats and Caps had lapsed into a still more ominous strife of classes. It was evident too that the lower Orders meant to fight *à l'outrance*. The extraordinary committee of 145 Ofrälse deputies, to whom the draft royal assurance was first submitted, received instructions to draft a list of privileges for the *Odalstand*¹ (as the lower Orders now began to call themselves), similar to those already enjoyed

¹ *i.e.* Allodial estate.

by the *Adelstand* or Nobility. The insolence with which the Ofrålse majority in the extraordinary committee rode roughshod over their opponents occasioned many violent and many disgraceful scenes, but finally the minority was bullied into silence, and the draft coronation oath containing the three revolutionary clauses was approved of unanimously.

In accordance with the tortuous procedure of the Riksdag, the draft coronation oath had now to pass through all four Estates before it could be presented to the King. The three lower Orders had naturally no difficulty in sanctioning a document which granted them all they wanted, but when the draft was sent up to the Riddarhus,¹ it was clear that the majority was dead against the smallest concession to the Ofrålse demands. For once both Hats and Caps were agreed; the differences of party were merged in the interests of caste, and after a stormy debate the Upper House resolved, by a majority of 107, to present a solemn remonstrance to the three lower Estates, urging them to abate their extravagant pretensions and be content with the coronation oath of the late King. An angry correspondence thereupon ensued between the Nobility and the Ofrålse Orders. The lower Estates rejected all the suggestions of the nobles as irrelevant and frivolous, and positively refused to reopen the question. The Peasants even went so far as to bluntly declare that they would not be bothered with any more messages from the Upper House. The Nobility were in a dilemma; they had gone too far to recede without dishonour, but a single step forward might now mean civil war. Against a resolute combination of the three lower Orders they were absolutely powerless. A mediation was the only conceivable way out of the difficulty. The only possible mediator was the King. The question was: Would his Majesty come to the assistance of his faithful Nobility?

¹ House of Nobles.

The day fixed by the King for his coronation had long passed by. All through the summer and autumn the Estates had been solely occupied in wrangling over the clauses of the coronation oath. Christmas was now at hand, and the only fruit of months of angry debate was a complete parliamentary deadlock. The foreign Ministers, the self-appointed wirepullers of the parliamentary puppet-show, were growing impatient. Russia, after expending no less than half a million of roubles in support of the Caps, had the mortification to see the control of the party pass into the hands of fanatical demagogues like Parson Kröger,¹ or greedy political speculators like Burgomaster Sundblad.² The Russian Minister, Osterman, therefore, now anxiously desired to terminate a Parliament which, in his eyes, became a nuisance the moment it ceased to be a tool. The French ambassador was, for once, of the same mind as his Russian colleague. Experienced as Vergennes undoubtedly was in diplomatic wiles, he appears to have completely lost himself in the labyrinth of Swedish politics. The royal Composition project had seemed to him the only firm resting-place in the midst of an ever-shifting chaos, and he spent his last livre upon it—and in vain. The

¹ Parson Kröger owed his ridiculous popularity to the zeal with which, in 1769, he took the Cap Senate and its name-stamp under his wing against the sense of the majority of the nation. The Caps naturally idolised him in consequence, and when they returned to power in 1771 he became one of their leading men. It was no unusual thing for this hero of freedom to be escorted to his straw-thatched cottage by scores of carriages, and thousands of doggrel ballads promised him immortality. The refrain of one of the most popular of them ran thus :—

*“ Den är för Sverges frihet tröger
Som icke älskar Prosten Kröger.”*
(i.e., “ He is no loyal Swedish burgher
Who does not cherish Parson Kröger.”)

² Sundblad was Burgomaster of Sigtuna, the poorest town in Sweden. Although he had no visible means of subsistence, for his official salary was purely nominal, he used his political advantages so well that he died a millionaire.

French Government, itself on the verge of bankruptcy, had no more money to throw into the Swedish quagmire, and Vergennes had strict instructions from D'Aiguillon to bring the Riksdag to a close as speedily as possible. The noble leaders of both factions were as anxious as the foreign Ministers to put a gag in the mouth of the unruly Ofråse majority, and they now all looked to the King for advice and assistance.

All this while the conduct of the King remained an inscrutable enigma. The Caps, indeed, subsequently maintained that he was the real though secret fomentor of this clash of classes; but the whole weight of the evidence is altogether against such a supposition, and his behaviour when things really came to a deadlock is the best proof that he was still anxious to avoid extremities. At first he had seemed to altogether shut his eyes to the fierce disputes between the Estates, as if he were the last instead of the first person whom the new clauses in the coronation oath immediately concerned. He had occupied himself with dramatic recitals, picnics, and excursions to his country chateaux; he had done nothing but sketch, embroider, compose verses, and invent new costumes. But this ostentatious frivolity was the mere mark of an argus-eyed wariness which nothing escaped. Gustavus clearly saw that a crisis was approaching, but it was not the crisis he had anticipated. His Composition project had only regarded the strife of factions, and the strife of factions had lapsed into the far more alarming phenomenon of a strife of Estates. His sympathies were naturally with the Nobility. The new coronation oath was even more offensive to him than it was to them, for it placed him absolutely at the mercy of men who persecuted freedom in the name of freedom. In resisting such a document, the Nobility seemed to him to be defending his prerogatives

quite as much as their own privileges. At the same time he was ill-disposed to embroil himself with three-fourths of his subjects for the sake of the remaining fourth, which had always been, and was now more than ever, unstable and capricious. Had Gustavus really been the Machiavellian schemer he is so often painted as, his course of action would have been plain enough. He would merely have had to instruct his friends to industriously foment the dissensions of the Estates, and have made capital out of the anarchy which must have ensued. But the patriotism of the King forbade him to do this, especially as he still laboured under the delusion that his Parliament was at least as patriotic as himself. He now resolved therefore to mediate between the Estates as he had previously mediated between the factions, and accordingly summoned the presidents of the four Orders to the palace to confer with him on the situation in the presence of the four senior Senators. "I desire," said he, "to represent most affectionately to the Estates of the realm the unhappy consequences which may ensue to them and to the realm if they do not speedily endeavour to restrain their mutual differences, especially at a time when such pressing evils as a bad harvest, pestilence, and famine more than ever demand harmony in their deliberations. Happy if I may contribute thereto, I now offer myself as a bond of unity between my fellow-citizens. It is for them to decide in what manner they will utilise my good intentions." He then requested the Presidents to deliver his message of pacification to their respective Estates.

The marshal of the Nobility and the talmen of the Priests and Peasants were enchanted by the graciousness of their sovereign, and promised to comply with his request. Not so the talman of the Order of Burgesses, Carl Frederick Sebaldt, a typical representative of the better

sort of middle-class politicians, into whose hands the government of Sweden had now fallen. Sebaldt was a self-made man, rugged, resolute, and energetic, a sound lawyer, a skilful debater, an honest politician, who could neither be bribed nor browbeaten. Unfortunately he was a Cap first and a Swede afterwards, and in superstitious reverence for the Constitution, in instinctive suspicion of the King, he went beyond the most fanatical of his fanatical sect. So now, too, behind Gustavus's fair words he scented some secret wile, and stepping forward, boldly declared that it was contrary to his oath as talman to present any royal message to his Estate which had not previously received the sanction of the Senate. Nay, his assurance went still further. He said he saw no need of mediation. The three lower Estates had once for all fixed the form of the coronation oath, and he felt sure that the Nobility, on mature reflection, would see the folly of a useless and obstructive opposition. Finally, he insinuated that his Majesty was committing an illegal act in attempting to communicate directly with the Estates. The King thereupon observed that the presence of the four senior Senators sufficiently showed that the Senate approved of the step he had taken. "Nay, sir," objected the irrepressible talman, "I can only regard these four gentlemen as your Majesty's personal friends," and again he refused to deliver the royal message to his Estate without a written authorisation from the Senate. In vain Gustavus indignantly demanded whether his royal word was not as good as a piece of paper. Sebaldt remained inflexible, and what was more, his conscientious scruples became contagious, for the marshal and the other two talmen now repented of their complacency, and retracted their promise to deliver the King's message to their respective Orders.

The history of this abortive attempt at mediation, with

its sequel, is an excellent example of the absurdity to which a slavish observance of legal forms may descend. The King announces to his Council his intention of mediating between the different Orders of his Parliament, whose fierce antagonism threatens the realm with civil war. Their Excellencies, while effusively expressing their gratitude at the royal condescension, deny that there is any occasion for the royal intervention. The King nevertheless persists, invites the presidents of the four Orders to a conference, and patriotically offers his mediation. The marshal of the Nobility on the following day informs the Upper House that his Majesty has made a speech which the Constitution forbids him to report to them. The talman of the Burgesses, on the other hand, absolutely declines to deliver any royal message which has not previously passed through the council-chamber. The King then desires to print his speech for circulation in the country. The Senate will not permit it to be printed without the sanction of the Secret Committee. The speech is nevertheless privately printed at Örebro. Then the Senate affects to regard as an act of high treason the printing of the very oration for the delivery of which they had previously expressed their thanks to the royal orator, and offer a reward for the discovery of the offender who dared to print it!

Immediately after Christmas the Estates resumed their consideration of the coronation oath. From January 1 to February 24, 1772, the wrangling between the Nobles and the three lower Orders went on. Finally, the efforts of the Russian ambassador and the counsels of the Cap leaders in the Upper House brought about a solution of the difficulty. The Nobility introduced a few trifling amendments for the sake of appearances; the lower Orders, well content with the kernel, were not disposed to quarrel about the husks, and the document passed through the Riddar-

hus, though only by a majority of 32 in a house of 686 members. "At last," wrote Gustavus to his mother, "at last, after a nine months' pregnancy and five months of labour, the Estates have been delivered of this precious document!" So late as the 11th February, he had resolved rather to resign his crown than sign the new coronation oath: on March 3 he signed it with cheerful alacrity, without even taking the trouble to read it. But in truth, other projects ripening in his fertile brain made him look upon everything laid before him by the Estates as so much waste paper. In fact, he was now hesitating on the brink of a revolution; the jolt which finally drove him to that desperate plunge again came from the fanaticism of the Estates.

The coronation oath finally disposed of to their entire satisfaction, nothing now prevented the triumphant Ofråse majority from beginning its long-meditated attack upon the detested Hat Senate, and it was round this last stronghold of the Swedish aristocracy that the fiercest struggle of the session was now to be waged. At first the issue of that struggle seemed very doubtful. The Senate had many and powerful friends. The King, the French ambassador, the majority of the Nobility, and the more moderate of the Cap leaders themselves were anxious to prevent its complete overthrow. The Senate itself met its opponents halfway with really magnificent concessions, by expressing its willingness to vacate no less than six chairs in the council-chamber in favour of the Caps, which was more than the Caps themselves had originally demanded. Even the Russian ambassador expressed himself satisfied with an arrangement which, by equally dividing the Senate between the two parties, would have formed what we should now call a Coalition Ministry. But the three lower Estates were not so easily satisfied. They had obtained a brand-

new coronation oath ; they were equally determined to have a brand-new Senate. Osterman himself was alarmed and disgusted at the fanatical violence of his friends. He clearly foresaw that the wholesale dismissal of the Senate would throw the bulk of the Nobility into the arms of the King, and precipitate the very crisis he was so anxious to avoid. He warmly remonstrated with the Ofråse Caps, but in vain. Then he attempted to bring them to reason by suddenly cutting off the supply of roubles with which he had hitherto so liberally fed their zeal. But this ambiguous remedy entirely destroyed the little influence which the Russian ambassador still possessed. The Ofråse Caps bluntly told Osterman that they were not disposed to be led any longer in Russian leading-strings, and, in open defiance of his entreaties, the motion for the absolute dismissal of the Senate was carried through the three lower Estates by large majorities.

On April 25, the question came before the first Estate. The King had earnestly impressed upon his friends in the Upper House the necessity of meeting the indictment of the three lower Orders with a unanimous vote of confidence, which, though it could not save the Senate, would enable it to fall with honour. The debate which now ensued was the most brilliant which had ever taken place within the walls of the Riddarhus. The Hats felt that they would be beaten, but they embittered the triumph of their opponents by many home-thrusts, and the glory of the debate was entirely theirs. Carl Hjerta in an impassioned address declared that henceforth he renounced the name of Swede. The royal historiographer, A. Schönberg, the ablest constitutional lawyer in the land, went over the articles of indictment one by one, and proved to demonstration that they were absurd as well as unjust. Wadenstjerna skilfully introduced the name of the King into the debate, and

expatiated upon the ingratitude with which all his patriotic efforts at conciliation had been met. "We have shown our thankfulness," said he, "by reviling the memory of his father, and eulogising those who insulted him. We deserve to be buried beneath the ruins of liberty with a warning epitaph for the benefit of all law-despising nations." Fersen, too, who had now nothing more to gain by reserve and nothing to lose by candour, more than justified his great reputation as a debater. How, he asked, could the Constitution itself fail to become odious in the eyes of the nation, when the Estates, instead of assisting the famine-stricken population, wasted all its energies in bickering over clauses and paragraphs? "At present," he concluded, "we merely do our best to deprive one another of proxies and places; ere long we may proceed a little further and pick our neighbours' pockets, and at last our very lives will not be safe from one another's attacks." The moderate Caps also warmly dissuaded a total dismissal of the Senate, but finally, though only by a majority of five in a house of 549 members, the Riddarhus confirmed the resolution of the lower Estates.

All four Orders had now pronounced the condemnation of the Senate, and the sentence was carried out with drastic thoroughness. The renegade Sinclair, who had sold his sovereign and his colleagues for the governorship of Pomerania,¹ was specially exempted as "less guilty" than the rest. Wallwijk, the Swedish Vicar of Bray, just saved his seat by changing sides for the fourth time. All the other senators were dismissed. But to fill the new Senate was by no means so easy or so pleasant a task as to turn out the old one. The unanimity with which every respectable politician hastened to decline the highest office in the state was truly remarkable. Nay, so much difficulty was experienced in collecting together a new Council, even from

¹ The most lucrative post in the gift of the Crown.

among the byeways and hedges of politics, that the perplexed majority, in its first irritation, seriously thought of making the refusal of the senatorial purple a high misdemeanour. At length, however, the difficulty was overcome without the aid of a penal statute, and Düben, a man of recognised and remarkable incapacity, presided over a Senate which Fersen sarcastically describes as "the weakest in political aptitude, but the most subservient to foreign Courts, which Sweden had yet possessed."

The situation of the young King was now truly deplorable. He had not a single friend in the new Senate. Its three most influential members were his bitterest enemies. He was little better than a hostage, for the maintenance of the existing anarchy, in the hands of ministers who were the humble servants of the Tsarina. Conscious of great powers, and animated by the honourable ambition of using these powers for the benefit of his country, he already saw himself condemned to the inglorious ease of a *roi faineant*. And what a dismal future awaited the land he had felt himself called upon to regenerate! Under the rule of the now dominant faction, Sweden could not fail to become first the vassal and then the prey of Russia. France was already preparing to abandon her ancient ally. Gustavus saw himself completely isolated in the midst of three States—Russia, Prussia, and Denmark—which had bound themselves by treaty to uphold the anarchical Constitution of Sweden, the source of all her misfortunes, by force of arms. It was not to be expected that a prince of Gustavus's disposition would tamely submit to his own and the national degradation. From henceforth he began to turn his thoughts towards a revolution, and fortune about this time threw into his way the two men who were to enable him to translate his thoughts into action.

CHAPTER VII.

PREPARING FOR A REVOLUTION.

Jacob Magnus Sprengtporten—His character—He first suggests the plan of a revolution—John Christopher Toll—His early career and character—He discovers Sprengtporten's secret—Amends the original plot—Suspensions of Sprengtporten—Both conspirators doubtful of the King—Gustavus confides the plot to the French Ambassador—The coronation—The subaltern conspirators—Imprudence of Prince Charles—Toll departs for Scania—Description of that province—Toll gains over Captain Hellichius—The plot nearly discovered in the capital—Anarchy in the Riksdag—General distress in the country from the bad harvests—Incompetence of the Parliament to deal with it—Financial embarrassments—Subserviency of the Caps to Russia—First partition of Poland—Goodrich, the English Minister, forewarns the Riksdag of the impending revolution—Alarm of the Government—Precautionary measures—Sprengtporten sent to Finland.

AMONGST the mob of deputies who had come up to the Riksdag to seek their fortunes was Baron Jacob Magnus Sprengtporten, one of those dangerous men who seem only meant to flourish in troublous times. An iron will, a keen judgment, an impenetrable reserve, a restless energy, and a natural masterfulness, marked out this needy Finnish nobleman as a leader of men. Fearlessness was his dominant characteristic, but his very fearlessness was peculiar. There was nothing of ardour in it—it was cold, calculating, rational. Sprengtporten had a positive passion for daring enterprises, but he always risked his life with his eyes wide open. On the other hand, his self-confidence was so absolute that it made

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him impatient of the slightest restraint, intolerant of the slightest contradiction. Himself a perfect stranger to doubt or fear, his contempt for the vacillating race of politicians, amongst whom his lot was cast, knew no bounds. The only person he really believed in was himself, every one else he regarded with a morbid distrust. Sprengtporten's was essentially a martial temperament. In his twelfth year he chose the profession of arms, and served his country with honour and distinction. The few and barren triumphs of the miserable Pomeranian war of 1756-62 were due almost entirely to young Sprengtporten, and he emerged from it with a lieutenant-colonelcy, a pension of £20, and the reputation of being the smartest officer in the service. Sprengtporten was, above all things, a man of action, and had too hearty a contempt for both Hats and Caps to belong to either. He regarded the monstrous system of misrule, for which they were primarily responsible, with sovereign contempt; made no secret of his sentiments, and soon gathered round him a devoted band of young officers, who were prepared to follow whithersoever he chose to lead, and whom he presently formed into a club of pronounced Royalist tendencies, which he called "*Svenska Botten*."¹ From that moment Sprengtporten became a marked man, and the Caps sought to ruin him by inciting his tenants in Finland to bring actions against him for alleged extortion, not in the ordinary courts, but in the Riksdag itself, where Sprengtporten's political adversaries would be his judges. The Finnish colonel at once resolved to meet fraud by force, and accordingly approached Count Carl Scheffer, who was known to possess the King's absolute confidence, with the following project:—A revolt against the tyranny of the Estates was to be begun in Finland,

¹ Sweden's groundwork.

where Sprengtporten's regiment, the Nyland Dragoons, was stationed, and where he also possessed some influence as a landed proprietor. He undertook, in the first place, to seize the fortress of Sveaborg, which was considered impregnable, by a *coup-de-main*. The submission of the whole Grand-Duchy would be the natural consequence of this success ; and Finland once secured, Sprengtporten proposed, at the head of his Finns, to embark for Sweden, meet the King and his friends at the little watering-place of Erstawik, near Stockholm, and surprise the capital by a night-attack. The Senate and the Secret Committee were to be arrested forthwith, and the Estates forced at the point of the bayonet to accept a new Constitution from the untrammelled King. Gustavus, to whom Scheffer at once imparted this project, warmly approved of it. Göran, Sprengtporten's younger brother, was also admitted to the secret, but it was not considered expedient to divulge the scheme to any one else till it had been more fully matured.

Matters had reached this stage when the secret, so religiously guarded, was mysteriously discovered, and the conspirators were unexpectedly and reluctantly reinforced by a confederate who, in audacious ability, far excelled them all.

A few weeks after the commencement of the session, a young man, named John Christopher Toll, had come up to Stockholm to seek his fortune. This young man was destined to be one of the greatest of Swedish statesmen, and to exercise an important, often a decisive, influence upon the fortunes of his country during three successive reigns. Hitherto, however, so far from giving promise of anything great, Toll's career had been such as to justify his friends in regarding him as a hopeless failure. In his childhood he had been chiefly remarkable for a dogged, impenetrable sluggishness, which drove his parents and

tutors to despair ; but when the lad was nearly ten years old, a sudden and wonderful change took place. He was playing with some boys of his own age, when one of them, in a frolic, took down from the wall an old pistol, which he presented at Toll's head, naturally supposing it to be unloaded. The pistol went off, the bullet just grazing the boy's head without hurting him. This providential escape—for so Toll always regarded it—seemed to burst the torpor which had hitherto benumbed his faculties : henceforth he became as quick, bright, and gay as before he had been sullen and stupid. But though he ceased to be dull, he continued to be lazy, and this perhaps was the reason why ill-luck persisted in dogging him. At first he entered the army and served through the Pomeranian war, but finding himself overlooked after many years of service, the future Field-Marshal quitted the army in disgust and applied himself to the study of the law, and by dint of hard work rose in four years to the rank of a puisne judge, when he had the misfortune to commit a formal irregularity which Hat officialdom magnified into a serious offence, and was once more turned adrift. Shortly afterwards he obtained, through a friend, the post of chief ranger of the province of Christiansand, but he had not held it for more than four months when the new Cap Government cancelled the appointment as having been improperly conferred. Thus, at the age of twenty-nine, Toll found himself thrown entirely on his own resources, with neither prospects nor a profession.

But to a man of genius everything is possible, and Toll was a man of genius in the fullest extent of the word. He possessed all Sprengtporten's strong points, and none of his weaknesses. He had the same indomitable will, the same imperturbable *sang-froid*, the same lynx-like wariness, the same intimate knowledge of human nature. But in

Toll these virile virtues were tempered by an exquisite tact and regulated by a perfect self-command. And he was the more amiable, as well as the abler man of the two. Sprengtporten's disposition was morose, envious, and unsocial; his manner was brusque and rude, his temper querulous and quarrelsome. Toll, on the other hand, delighted every one by his frank *bonhomie*, good-nature, ready wit, and a humour which sometimes condescended to buffoonery. But what gave a peculiar elevation and dignity to Toll's character was the earnest piety which he had learnt at the knee of a devout mother, and to which he always remained unalterably faithful. Twenty-five years later, when the fallen Minister was arraigned on a trumped-up charge of high treason before a tribunal composed of his bitterest enemies, and the public prosecutor, in the legal phraseology of the day, demanded that he should forfeit life, honour, and goods, Toll could exclaim with equal truth and spirit, "My life belongs to the Almighty, my honour to history, and the only good I possess after a long and faithful service of the crown is a good conscience, of which no man can deprive me."

Toll's exterior was majestic and imposing; his stature was gigantic, his physical strength herculean. His features were imperturbably placid, except when occasionally lit up by a slightly ironical smile.

Toll had not been in Stockholm long before he began to suspect that a revolution was secretly brewing. His first conjectures, however, were premature and erroneous. The King's Composition Project misled him. He had such a hearty contempt for representative government in general, that he could not conceive the possibility of Gustavus seriously intending to patch up such a tatterdemalion representative government as that of Sweden. Full of the idea that the Composition was a mere blind, he cautiously

approached Count Frederick Horn, who appeared to stand well with his Majesty just then, and volunteered his services to effect a revolution in the King's favour similar to the revolution which had lately overthrown Struensee in Denmark. Gustavus coquetted with this idea at first, and there was some talk of sending Toll on a filibustering expedition to Norway, but nothing came of it ultimately. This rebuff convinced Toll that he had been on the wrong scent, and that Horn had no part in the secret counsels of the Court, as he had at first supposed. He therefore set about discovering who was the real confidant, and his natural astuteness, assisted by a few stray hints, convinced him that it could be no other than Jacob Magnus Sprengtporten. Toll was not personally acquainted with the Colonel, but he knew his brother Göran pretty well, and dexterously involved him one day in a political conversation, hoping to worm his secret out of him. The cautious Göran, who took Toll for a Cap spy, parried his inquiries with an excess of wariness which defeated its own object. Toll, quite convinced now that there was something in the background, boldly took the bull by the horns. "Your brother," said he, "is in connivance with the King, or I am blind; but if I haven't a finger in the pie the game cannot properly be played. I long to be doing, and only want an opportunity."

Sprengtporten immediately hastened to his brother, informed him that somehow Toll had got a clue to their secret, and advised that such a dangerous man should either be put out of the way at once or made a confederate, and the latter alternative the elder Sprengtporten at once adopted. An interview followed, and Sprengtporten asked Toll point-blank what he thought about the possibility of a revolution. Toll thought that the revolution should commence in the capital under the King's own eye, but

that a revolt should break out simultaneously in one of the southern provinces, so that his Majesty, in the event of failure at Stockholm, might have an army corps and a fortress to fall back upon. Toll undertook to personally secure the fortress of Christianstad in Southern Sweden, and saw no difficulty in winning over the regiments there also. Sprengtporten seems to have caught at this suggestion from the first, and Toll's resolute, confident manner so impressed him, that throwing off all reserve, but at the same time exacting an oath of secrecy from his companion, he detailed his own plan and invited Toll to freely criticise it. "We are," said he, "our own counsellors, and ought therefore to keenly scrutinise beforehand every point of our plan of operations. Of course we must be prepared in case of failure for certain death, which we shall meet with cool contempt, satisfied if thereby we escape at least humiliation and find a swift oblivion; but we must be careful to avoid any indiscretion which might cost a young, amiable King his crown, and burden our consciences with the blood of thousands of our fellow-citizens."

After a long debate, Toll's proposal was dovetailed into the original plan. It was arranged that a few days after the Finnish revolt had begun, the southern fortress of Christianstad should close its gates and openly declare against the Government; that Prince Charles, the eldest of the King's brothers, should thereupon hastily mobilise the garrisons of the various southern fortresses for the ostensible purpose of crushing the revolt at Christianstad, but that on arriving before the walls, he should throw off the mask, make common cause with the rebels, and march upon the capital from the south while Sprengtporten and his Finns attacked from the east. As, however, Sprengtporten would have to cross the sea, and contrary winds might delay, and even prevent, his embarkation, he was to have a

clear start of eleven days in advance of the plotters nearer home.

Matters had reached this stage when it suddenly occurred to the suspicious Sprengtporten that his new confederate must necessarily be a traitor. It was at one of their usual midnight interviews that this sudden paroxysm of distrust seized him. When Toll entered the room, Sprengtporten's manner was offensive and his replies monosyllabic. Toll, much surprised, asked what was the matter. Sprengtporten fiercely rejoined that he had good reason to suspect Toll's loyalty, and that if he found his suspicions confirmed he would take a terrible vengeance. As he uttered these words he cast a significant glance at a pair of pistols which were lying on the table. Toll coolly requested his comrade to be a little more explicit, but the only reason Sprengtporten could give for his nascent suspicion was that Toll's countenance wore an unusually "sly and saturnine expression" that night. After one or two such scenes, Toll at last fairly lost patience, threatened to break off all negotiations with him, and take his orders from the King alone rather than submit to such insults, whereupon Sprengtporten apologised for his "unfortunate habit of suspecting everybody," and admitted he had really nothing to complain of.

Sprengtporten and Toll had an almost unbounded confidence in themselves and an equally unbounded contempt of the Cap Government, but there was one doubtful point which they felt might upset all their calculations, and that was the character of the King. Neither of them knew exactly what to make of Gustavus. They recognised and respected his political capacity; they reckoned upon his eloquence as one of their most useful instruments; but they had not the very highest opinion of his personal courage. They were not quite certain whether he was the

right man for so perilous an enterprise. To us, who can review the whole career of Gustavus from the vantage-point of another century, it seems absurd to suspect of cowardice the hero of Svenksund, the conqueror of the Danes and Russians, the queller of the most martial and most mutinous nobility in the world; but in those early days the scruples of Toll and Sprengtporten were justifiable. Gustavus III. was by no means of a robust constitution, and his most ardent panegyrists candidly admit that he had anything but a martial temperament. The profession of arms had no attraction for him. He even shrank from the hardy pleasures of the chase. His disposition was soft and mild, his habits were luxurious, many of his tastes almost feminine. He had, as yet, given few signs of that marvellous moral courage which used to fill with amazement those who fancied they knew him best. The two audacious adventurers might well be pardoned for doubting whether a refined fribbler, who had never smelt powder, was the fit director of a military revolt which might at any moment become a bloody civil war, and their doubts cost them many cruel anxieties. Yet both of them seem to have had an inkling of that reserve of force concealed behind the careless gaiety of the young monarch, for on one occasion Sprengtporten expressed himself as certain that if his Majesty were only driven into a corner he would certainly fight like a man. At the same time they resolved to leave as little as possible to chance, by keeping the King in the background till the very last moment, when, as Sprengtporten expressed it, "we must thrust a weapon into his hand and trust to him to use it."

Sprengtporten lost no time in laying the new scheme before the King, who appeared to accept it with confident enthusiasm. We know, however, from the dispatches of the French ambassador, that Gustavus was much disturbed

by what he had heard. "I found him," wrote Vergennes to his Court, on the day after the private interview in which the King broke the news to him and demanded some pecuniary assistance, "I found him unusually agitated. He told me he could no longer endure the humiliations which the Estates were inflicting upon him. . . . He saw that they only wanted to place him beneath the yoke of Russia, but that he was resolved rather to die than submit to such a disgrace, and be regarded as a weakling by the rest of Europe." It must be confessed, however, that the attitude of the ambassador on this occasion was scarcely calculated to fortify the young monarch. The royal secret seems to have fluttered the cautious Frenchman pretty considerably, and at first he tried to back out of it altogether. Finally "hard pressed, or rather constrained by the earnest supplications of the King," he reluctantly promised to open his purse, on the express condition that he was not to be required to take any active part in the revolution.

In the midst of these secret plottings the King (on May 29) celebrated his coronation, and once again solemnly swore to defend the Constitution, which he was already about to overthrow. It was from this time forth that he began to practise that masterly dissimulation which Sheridan, with reluctant admiration, and Fryxell, with hysterical indignation, have erroneously imputed to him from the very beginning of his reign.

The coronation, despite its exceptional magnificence, was sad and sombre. For two successive years there had been an almost total failure of the crops. The suffering people were bowed down by this terrible visitation. The public was not festively disposed. The confusion in Parliament was approaching its climax. Thoughtful politicians were haunted by dark forebodings. The impending revolution

seemed to cast its shadow before it. The only person who appeared to be quite himself was the King. He affected a careless gaiety which imposed upon every one. He appeared to be more than ever taken up with trifles. His coronation appeared to engross his thoughts, and he spared no pains to make it magnificent. The royal retinue was increased fourfold. The programme of the ceremonial filled fifty-four folio pages of print, and extended over 219 paragraphs. A new order of knighthood—the Vasa Order, or Order of the Sheaf—was instituted, despite the grumbling remonstrances of the Caps, to reward all¹ who had promoted agriculture or trade. All the members of the late Senate were created Counts, to the intense disgust of the new senators, who had to be content with the barren honour of bearing the regalia before the King. By special command, the Knights of the Seraphim, the Sword, and the North Star officiated in the full dress of their respective Orders, and their gorgeous black and white, blue and white and crimson mantles, vied with the sumptuous scarlet and ermine robes of the senators. Gustavus himself, resplendent in cloth of silver, rode beneath a canopy borne by sixteen grandees, in the midst of a brilliant circle of noblemen. During the religious ceremony within the cathedral an amusing incident occurred. The herald whose function it was to proclaim the King, immediately the crown had been placed upon his head, when he came to pronounce the ancient formula: “Now is Gustavus III. crowned King of the Swedes and Goths, he and no other! Long live the King!” stumbled at the last sentence and cried instead, “Long live he and no other!” whereupon Gustavus, turning to his suite, remarked with a smile, “Nay, let the others live too, or I shall have none to reign over!” On the return of the procession from the cathedral, money was scattered among

¹ The Marquis of Mirabeau was the first foreign member of the Order.

the crowds which lined the road, and the thick silver horse-shoes with which the royal charger was shod were loosened, so that he might cast them off for the benefit of the lucky scramblers. All the time the state banquet lasted, the fountains ran wine, and a stalled ox stuffed full with game and poultry was roasted whole in the market-place for the public behoof. It was the last time the populace of the Swedish capital was to feast off a coronation ox.

Two days after the coronation the Estates of the realm took the oath of allegiance to the newly-crowned King in the largest of the public squares, overlooking one of the most charming prospects of the picturesque Mälare. The weather was superb, the people turned out in their thousands, and the King addressed the countless multitude in a speech which even Fersen, who heard it, has described as "a collection of the noblest sentiments, embellished by the most graceful fluency." It does not seem, however, to have produced all the effect contemplated by the orator. It was not so much that the charm of novelty had worn off, as Fersen supposes, as that the Caps had begun to fear the eloquence of the King, especially as oratory was a weapon which they themselves handled but indifferently. The very next day the Secret Committee seriously considered whether it would not be for the good of the state if the King were absolutely inhibited from speaking in public, and compelled to communicate his wishes through the Chancellor. Fortunately there was still sufficient good sense left, even in the Cap ranks, to prevent the majority from gagging Sweden's greatest speaker by a special Act of Parliament.

Meanwhile the preparations for a revolution were being energetically pushed forward. The circle of the conspirators had been considerably widened, and to each of them had been assigned his part. Gustavus, in a mysteriously significant

letter to "his brother on the other side of the water," had implored Louis XV. to assist him in an enterprise in which he was about to engage "for the happiness of his people, the honour of his crown, and the welfare of Europe," and the French Court, convinced at last that Gustavus was really in earnest, instructed Vergennes to keep his purse open to the demands of the Swedish monarch. Sprengtporten had selected and drilled his subalterns with admirable care and judgment. Chief among them were Henrik af Trolle, a naval officer of great experience and remarkable courage, Baron Saltza of the Guards, and Captains König and Hintzenstjerna. Trolle was to co-operate with Sprengtporten in Finland, where his influence was considerable, the others were to remain with Gustavus in the capital after Sprengtporten's departure. Gustavus, despite Sprengtporten's protest, had also intrusted the secret to the Queen's reader, Beylon, and the invaluable services which that faithful retainer rendered to "the good cause" amply justified the royal confidence. As much cannot be said of the discretion of Prince Charles. That imprudent young man was just then held in silken chains by the lovely Aurora Löwenhjelm, and he could not find it in his heart to conceal from his young mistress the perilous enterprise in which he was to take a leading part, so in a tender moment he confided the whole secret to her. The lives of all the conspirators now hung upon a gossamer. Aurora was flighty and frivolous ; she was also the favourite niece of Fersen. The temptation of making capital out of her first political secret must have been well-nigh irresistible. But a miracle occurred ; the young lady (she was only eighteen) actually held her tongue.

Two days after the coronation the first decisive step was taken : Toll set out for Christianstad. No man was ever so slenderly equipped for so hazardous an enterprise. Twenty-

two pounds was all the money he had wherewith to corrupt a garrison, revolt a province, subvert a government. Those to whom he was sent had far more reason to regard him as a Cap spy than as a royal commissioner. Very little was known about him, and that little was not to his credit. It was hard to believe that the King would employ such a man on such an errand ; it was inconceivable that, if he did employ him, he would not furnish him with so much as a letter of recommendation. One would have imagined that a man of Sprengtporten's common-sense would have at least provided Toll with some sort of credentials. But his excessive caution again prevailed. Not only did he dissuade the King from signing anything, but he refused to put pen to paper himself, and Toll, on the night before his departure, was obliged to take down from dictation the instructions of his inexorable chief. At their final interview Sprengtporten expressed his surprise that Toll had said nothing about the reward he expected for his services. "I don't trouble my head about that," replied Toll ; "if I succeed, I have no doubt I shall not be overlooked ; and if I fail, I can endure the rack and wheel just as well without as with a promise of a reward."

The province of Scania, which was to be the pivot of the Swedish revolution, is the southernmost extremity of the Swedish peninsula. Although by far the smallest, it is incomparably the most fertile of all the Swedish provinces, and many, bloody, and fruitless had been the wars waged by Denmark to recover possession of the granary of Scandinavia. In this one province lay three of the principal fortresses of Sweden, Christianstad, Landscrona, and Malmö. Here too was the great arsenal of Carlsrona, beneath whose protecting guns the Swedish navy had so often found a refuge. Thus, whoever held Scania, held in his hands a full fourth of the material and military resources

of Sweden, and that was why Toll had selected this province. On the other hand, he was not blind to the enormous and peculiar risk he ran in these parts. Scania had always been one of the strongholds of the Cap party, and some idea may be formed of the difficulties of Toll's task when we call to mind that of all the officers stationed in the south, there were only two whom Sprengtporten regarded as safe men—Captain Abraham Hellichius of Christianstad and Major Kaulbars of Malmö.

On June 21, Toll reached Christianstad, and at once commenced operations by sounding Hellichius. This man, who was as much a tool of Toll's as the sword he wore by his side, was for long regarded as the real and sole author of the Scanian revolt. Nor is this at all surprising. It was necessary for the success of the plot that Toll should efface himself as much as possible, and this he contrived to do so effectually that very few of his own countrymen at first suspected that he had had a hand in the revolution. Even well-informed foreigners like Sheridan and Michelessi¹ give the whole honour of the affair to Hellichius, though he was, really, but a simple, ignorant, and superstitious soldier, as weak as wax in the strong and supple hands of Toll, who read his character at a glance and won him irrevocably to the good cause in a week. Toll was no sooner sure of Hellichius than he set about reconnoitring the rest of the southern fortresses, a task which was to occupy him for the next six weeks.

Meanwhile we must follow the course of events in the capital.

On June 20, the King, accompanied by his brother Charles, left Stockholm for the baths of Loka, ostensibly for the benefit of his health, really to escape for a time the

¹ Neither Sheridan nor Michelessi, though they were eye-witnesses of the revolution at Stockholm, seem to have heard of Toll.

surveillance of the Estates. It was here that, with the assistance of Carl Scheffer, he drafted the new Constitution which the Riksdag was compelled to ratify after the revolution. On the return journey from Loka to the capital an accident happened which might have cost Gustavus dear. Tempted by the fineness of the weather, he had bathed in one of the innumerable little creeks which intersect the picturesque shores of Mälare. On arriving at the palace, he missed from his pocket a memorandum on which he had jotted down the particulars of the meditated *coup-d'état*. Very much perturbed, he returned at once and alone to his morning's bathing-place, and, after a painful search for hours along the shore, was fortunate enough to at last discover the compromising document fluttering in the grass. On another occasion, the King and his brother Charles were pacing to and fro in one of the apartments of the Palace of Haga discussing the revolution, and little suspecting that one of the royal pages, who had fallen asleep behind a screen, but had been awakened by the sound of their voices, was an unwilling and astounded listener. The boy had the good sense, however, to keep his own counsel.

On his return to Stockholm on July 8, Gustavus found the situation of parties in the Riksdag very favourable to his designs. After the deposition of the Senate, disorder gained the upper hand in the Parliament more and more every day. The majority, no longer finding any obstacle to its sovereign will, transgressed all bounds. Even the beneficial restraint of corruption was now withdrawn, for since Russia had ceased to bribe voters and buy votes, anarchy had free play. All the leading Hats had quitted the capital. All the leading Caps had lost the little influence they ever had. The dregs of Swedish politics floated on the surface. Third and fourth rate orators now

made their voices heard. The Secret Committee was stocked with patriots who could scarcely sign their own names. An ex-sergeant who had been flogged out of the army gave the tone to the Swedish aristocracy, and ruled the Riddarhus absolutely.

Yet common prudence, to say nothing of common humanity, should have made it the first, instead of the last, care of the Estates to rally all their resources in order to grapple with the terrible foes which were now ravaging every province of Sweden—dearth and famine. Ever since the beginning of 1771 this terrible visitation had occupied the attention of the King and the local authorities. At the very commencement of his reign, Gustavus had suggested that, so long as grain remained so scarce, the distillation of spirits should be forbidden, or at least restricted; but, unhappily, even spirit-distillation was a party question, for it was one of the first principles of Cap economics to protect that industry at all hazards. The Secret Committee therefore tinkered where it should have remodelled, by simply lowering the duties on foreign corn. In the autumn the Executive made a second attempt to open the eyes of the Estates. A committee of three senators, under the presidency of the King, sat to collect evidence, and, in its report to the Secret Committee, proved conclusively that a prohibition of spirit-distilling would save the country no less than 300,000 tons of corn annually. But even then the Caps could not be persuaded to do without their spirits; they only reduced the duties on the importation of corn a little lower. In the summer of 1772 a second total failure of the crops completed the exhaustion of the land; but this calamity, which brought the Swedish peasantry to the verge of starvation, did not bring the Swedish Legislature to reason. When the revolution burst upon

the Government, it was engaged in disputing as to who was really responsible for the general distress. At the last moment, indeed, the Bank of Sweden was permitted to buy corn for the afflicted districts, but the quantity bought was ridiculously inadequate, and not half of it ever reached its destination. The Executive did everything in its power, but it had not power enough to control the semi-independent officials, who were its own judges in the Riksdag. Loud complaints were made as to the mode in which the grain was distributed, and in many places the peasantry were too poor to purchase the corn at the price offered. In the south-east the grain-ships got as far as Gothenburg, but could get no farther, because the shipbrokers in that city could not agree with the shipbrokers of the port of Wenersborg as to freights. Another large consignment of grain lay for months in Stockholm harbour because the Estate of Peasants considered the price of it too dear, and in the meantime thousands of starving wretches were stuffing themselves with bran and birch-bark, and in the Dales the deaths were counted by hundreds.

Equal incompetence was displayed by the Estates in their dealings with the enormous national debt and the financial deficit. That deficit now amounted to fifty tons of gold, or nearly £388,887, a crippling burden at that time for so poor a country as Sweden. The Secret Committee at first attempted to shift its financial responsibilities on to the King's shoulders by referring the matter to him; but his Majesty, ill-disposed to become the scapegoat of parliamentary incompetence, pertinently pointed out that, as the regulation of the finances and the management of the bank were expressly and exclusively reserved to the Estates by the Constitution, the Estates ought to know best how the deficit had arisen, and how

best to meet it. The Secret Committee, therefore, was reluctantly compelled to refer the matter back to the Riksdag, but the only remedy the Riksdag could suggest was the now stereotyped one of wholesale retrenchment, including a proposal to cut down the national defences to starvation-point. The debates on this subject gave the Estate of Peasants the opportunity of insisting upon being represented in the Secret Committee, threatening otherwise to refuse to vote the supplies for the current year. This led to an acrimonious squabble between the Peasants and the other three Orders, which dragged on for nearly two months. Finally, the Peasants carried their point, but the revolution interposed before they could taste the fruits of their victory.¹

But it was in harrying its political opponents that the Cap majority displayed its greatest energy, and wherever it was possible, "the Riksdag's robber-hordes," as Fersen dubs them, successfully combined spoliation with persecution. Many of the wealthy Hat merchants were entangled in ruinous actions before extra-judicial tribunals, from which they could only extricate themselves by the payment of costly fines. This, too, was the time for individual politicians to gratify long-standing private grudges for their country's good. Thus Serenius, the fanatical Cap Bishop of Strengnäs, not only requited his old antagonist Filenius, the Hat Bishop of Linköping, for past offences, but cleared his own diocese of all the canons and prebends who had the bad taste to hold political opinions divergent from his own. Gustavus, too, was made to feel the heavy hand of his Parliament. Attenuated as the prerogative now was, the King still possessed the right of veto in certain cases of preferment, and the Constitution expressly

¹ The one bright spot in the long and dreary annals of this wasteful Parliament was the attempt, on the motion of Frietzsky, to reform the currency.

provided that no important state appointment should be made without his consent and confirmation. The Estates, with ostentatious insolence, now treated this right as non-existent by appointing Rudbeck Governor-General of Stockholm, by sending Count Posse to Finland as High Admiral, and by promising the unprincipled clerical demagogue Wikjman the first fat benefice in the gift of the crown that should fall vacant.

The domestic policy of the Caps was thus a policy of pillage and persecution, but suicidal is the only epithet that can be applied to their foreign policy. It consisted in drawing still tighter the bonds which already united Sweden to Russia. From the Cap point of view, indeed, such a *rapprochement* was only natural. They owed their power to Russia, and only through Russia could they maintain it. The real leader of the Cap party was Osterman, the Russian ambassador. Gustavus might well feel alarmed for the independence of his country. It was part of a long-conceived plan of Catherine II. to unite all the states dependent upon Russia into a so-called "Grand Northern Alliance," and a fresh treaty with Sweden, whereby the Tsarina renewed the guarantee of the integrity of the Swedish Constitution, was to be the first link in this diplomatic chain. It was a significant commentary upon the charitable designs of the Empress, and a warning to the weaker members of the Northern League, that Russia, Prussia, and Austria should, on August 5, have subscribed the treaty for the first partition of Poland, one of the earliest members of the confederacy. Stockholm was the first European capital which received authentic information of that great political crime. A year before, the Swedish Foreign Office had warned the French Court of the secret designs of Russia upon Poland; and if Choiseul had still held office, it is possible that Poland, even then, might

have been saved. But Aiguillon, Choiseul's supplanter (he could not be called his successor), lifted not a finger in defence of the most ancient ally of the French monarchy. Such apathy on the part of France, once so jealous of her own honour, was one of the most portentous signs of the times, and was particularly ill-foreboding for the independence of Sweden, whose relations with France on one side, and with Russia on the other, were now precisely similar to those of Poland. The Turkish war had indeed, for the last four years, fully engaged Catherine's attention; but the annihilation of the Ottoman fleet at Chesme, and the brilliant victories of Milardovich and Weissman on the Danube, had apparently broken the stubborn resistance of the Turk, and inclined the Sublime Porte to peace. Sweden, therefore, was in a most critical position. The dangers which threatened her from without, even more than the divisions which distracted her within, made a prompt and vigorous revolution an absolute necessity. To further postpone was to practically abandon it. Russia once freed on the Turkish side, a *coup-d'état* in Sweden could not possibly succeed.

Late in June, Henrik af Trolle and the younger Sprengtporten returned to Finland, the former to his ship, the latter to his regiment. Both were well provided with funds, and had every facility for preparing the way for Jacob Magnus himself. Finland and Scania were to join hands. Some anxious weeks followed, Sprengtporten was almost in daily communication with his emissaries. From the south the tidings were, on the whole, satisfactory. Toll had reconnoitred all the Scanian fortresses, minutely explored the whole country-side, and sounded all the navigable creeks along the coast. He found the officers at Landscrona and Malmö loyal but apathetic, while the garrison of Carlsrona was "imbued with the spirit of

impenetrable dulness." On the other hand, Christianstad was ripe for revolt, and instant action was advisable. Much more disquieting were the news from Finland. Although Trolle had a far easier task before him than Toll, he was far less successful. A few weeks after his arrival in the Grand-Duchy, he gave a very dismal account of the state of things. The spirit of the garrison of Sveaborg was not encouraging. The attitude of the Finns was reserved and suspicious. What was he to do? Would it not be better to defer the enterprise? In short, it was plain that Sprengtporten was the only man capable of heading the revolt in Finland. But then there was the apparently insuperable difficulty of escaping from the capital. Ingenious as he was, Sprengtporten was at his wit's end for a plausible excuse, when an awkward accident, which seemed to strike at the very root of the whole conspiracy, gave him the opportunity he desired.

The English Minister at Stockholm, Sir John Goodrich, was by common consent the most quick-witted and keensighted of the whole diplomatic corps. From the very first he suspected that the King was going about with some nefarious design, and circumstances now placed in his hands strong confirmation of his worst suspicions. In the middle of July, a special courier from London arrived at the English Embassy at Stockholm with a copy of the secret confidential letter which Gustavus had written to Louis XV., imparting to him his revolutionary project. How the English Government got hold of this document still remains a mystery. Grimm is certain that Madame Du Barry purloined it from under the pillow of the French King while he slept. Others opine that it was obtained by the more indirect method of bribing one of the clerks in the French Foreign Office. Anyhow, Goodrich now held in his hands direct proof of what he had been suspecting all

the time, and he at once placed the incriminating document in the hands of the Caps. Fortunately for Gustavus, he had expressed himself in such very general terms in this letter, that the Government could make nothing out of it but a very vague warning ; all that they could gather from it was, that some time at the end of August some sort of a revolt might be expected somewhere. Still it was sufficiently startling, and the Riksdag at once proceeded to adopt preventive measures. A battalion of Uplanders, the most Capish regiment in the service, was to be in readiness to march into the capital at a moment's notice ; all the civil and military authorities in the country were to be exhorted to watchfulness ; "zealous, trusty, and discerning men" were to be dispatched to the provinces. Sprengtporten was instantly ordered off to Finland, ostensibly to inquire into the cause of a dearth of salt there, really to separate him from the King. Such an energetic, perfervid Royalist was held to be no fit companion for a young constitutional Prince, and the Caps only regretted that they had not severed the pernicious connection long before. Special commissioners posted off in all directions. A fresh warning from the well-informed English Minister that "another mine was preparing in the south to support the first," induced the Government, at the last moment, to send an extraordinary High Commissioner to the south, and no less a personage than the Cap leader Rudbeck undertook this important charge. The safety of the capital was considered amply provided for by the appointment of the redoubtable Pechlin as Governor-General of Stockholm till Rudbeck's return.

Sprengtporten could scarcely believe his ears when he learnt that the Government had decided to send him to Finland. At first he scented a snare ; the news was too good to be true. Then he began to fear that his com-

mission might be revoked. He affected, therefore, to regard it as an ostracism. He let all Stockholm know how sore he was at this fresh act of capricious tyranny. He implored the King, the Senate, and the Secret Committee to cancel the appointment. He even went so far as to petition the Riddarhus, where he had many friends, to interfere on his behalf; but he took good care to embark before his petition could be heard.

At the moment of his departure he received a letter from the King counselling caution, and exhorting him in case of serious and unexpected resistance to abandon the whole enterprise rather than sacrifice a life so valuable to the state. This letter was accompanied by a royal act of confirmation, drawn up by Sprengtporten, but signed and sealed by Gustavus. Unluckily, the royal signature on this occasion was not the usual signature and almost illegible, while the impress of the royal signet on the wax was a mere blot. Such irregularities could not have come at a more inauspicious time. Upon the habitually suspicious mind of Sprengtporten they made an ineffaceable impression. He interpreted them to mean that the King would disavow his own signature in case of accident.¹

¹ It would appear, however, that Sprengtporten had never meant the King to sign this authority. He intended, in case of need, to make use of a forgery of the royal autograph which he had about him.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE "COUP-D'ÉTAT" OF AUGUST 1772.

Sprengtporten seizes Sveaborg and secures Finland—Critical position of Toll at Christianstad—By his audacity he gains over the garrison—Governor-General Rudbeck arrives and is refused admission—Isolation of the King—Rudbeck informs the Government of the outbreak—Fresh precautions—The King watched—Secret counter-measures of Gustavus—He wins over the Burgher Guard—Grand reception at the Palace—Wonderful *sang-froid* of the King—He regales his guests with the first Swedish opera—His final preparations—The 19th August—The King at the Arsenal and in the guard-room—Arrest of the Senate—Dispersal of the Secret Committee—Escape of Pechlin—Triumphal progress of the King through the city—The white handkerchief—Enthusiasm of the people—Consternation of the *Corps Diplomatique*—Submissive attitude of Fersen—Reconvocation of the Riksdag—The royal oration—Obsequiousness of the Estates—The new Constitution—Dismissal of the Riksdag—Rewards and punishments—Reflections.

ON July 22, Sprengtporten left Stockholm; on the 9th August he reached Helsingfors, the capital of Finland, where he presented his credentials. He had previously sent his ablest lieutenant, A. K. Ehrensward, to Sveaborg, but that officer gave such a very unsatisfactory account of the state of the garrison there, that even Sprengtporten thought it prudent to postpone his *coup-de-main* for another week. After several days of painful anxiety, however, he decided to take his dragoons by sea to Sveaborg. He had formed and trained this corps himself, and every man in it was devoted to his Colonel. On August 14 the wind, long contrary, proved favourable. Sprengtporten assembled his

dragoons. In a spirited harangue he exhorted them to draw their swords for their King against the tyranny of the Estates, and they took with alacrity the oath of allegiance which he prescribed to them. Then, after dispatching Cornet Essen to cut off all communication with Sveaborg by land, and Lieutenant Cossa to kidnap Senator Reuterholm,¹ who was making a tour of the Grand-Duchy, Sprengtporten embarked with the rest on board a yacht. But the wind suddenly veered round again, and it was not till the 16th that Sprengtporten and his little band arrived beneath the walls of the fortress. Sprengtporten was, as usual, swift, sure, and decisive; nowhere, however, did he meet with any serious resistance. He assembled the officers of the garrison, informed them that in all he did or was about to do he was only obeying his Majesty's instructions, and promised, in the King's name, liberal rewards to all who should assist him. The majority joyfully offered their services, the rest adapted themselves to circumstances. The rank and file naturally followed the example of their chiefs. Sprengtporten next paid a flying visit to Helsingfors, compelled all the civil and military authorities there to take the new oath of allegiance, and appropriated 72,000 dalers (about £2700) which he found in the treasury there. On the same day a courier was sent to Stockholm with a letter for the King. A manifesto in the King's name was also circulated, inviting the Finns to rise against the Government; detachments of dragoons patrolled the country to keep order; all the garrisons on the Russian frontier were reinforced. In a week all Finland lay at the feet of the intrepid Colonel of the Borga Dragoons. By 23rd August Sprengtporten was ready to re-embark for Stockholm with 780 men, but the wind, which had been his worst enemy

¹ So cleverly was he captured, that he told Sprengtporten that the revolution was bound to succeed if all the other details were equally well managed.

all through, again compelled him to put back, and in the meantime events had occurred in the Swedish capital which rendered his presence there unnecessary.

We have seen that the arrival of Prince Charles in Scania was to be the signal for the outbreak of the revolt in the south. In the middle of July the Prince quitted the capital. The parting between the brothers was tender, and even tearful; they parted like men who were never to meet again. At the last moment the King broke in two a silver daler piece, half of which he gave to the Prince, who was to pay no heed to any orders, even if signed by Gustavus, unless the bearer of them could show the counterpart.

Meanwhile Toll at Christianstad was impatiently waiting orders. His position was every day becoming more embarrassing. Hellichius, who had now the lives of the garrison on his conscience, was growing restive. At length, on August 6, Toll, to his inexpressible relief, received from Prince Charles a letter announcing his speedy arrival, and bidding him inform Hellichius that his services would be substantially rewarded. On the same evening the officers of the garrison of Christianstad were summoned to the head-quarters of Hellichius to fix the exercises for the following day. Toll was then introduced, and Hellichius requested him to unfold his plan to them. The only answer Toll made was to invite them into the adjoining room, where a cheery log-fire was blazing on the hearth, and the tables were covered with sumptuous fare and flagons of choice wine. Toll bade his guests charge their glasses, and proposed the toast, "A safe and speedy journey home to the Estates of the realm!" Every one was then well plied with liquor, and Toll made them a speech in which the projected revolution was painted in the most roseate hues. An animated discus-

sion began. Objections, reservations, doubts, fears, made themselves heard on every side, but Toll's tact and ingenuity found an answer for every one of them. A young lieutenant, a notorious gambler and heavily involved, remarked that the enterprise seemed to him a very break-neck affair. "All the more reason," replied Toll, smacking him on the shoulder, "why it should spur your zeal. Your creditors will not squeeze you so much when they see you risk so little to gain so much." Another officer considered a revolution impracticable without foreign aid. "You are right," promptly replied Toll; "but I see from the gazettes that the King of Prussia is assembling a camp in Pomerania to aid us in case of need." The officer, ashamed that a civilian should be so much better informed on military subjects, immediately recollected all about the camp in question, which, it is needless to say, solely existed in Toll's imagination. It was a critical moment, however, for the ex-ranger when he was at last requested to produce his written instructions; but, with imperturbable *sang-froid*, he at once drew from his pocket a handful of papers from which he gravely read imaginary extracts; replaced them without giving his audience time to examine them too critically, and proceeded to distribute to each one the part he was to play in the ensuing drama. By this time the night was well over, and with the first morning light all the soldiers of the garrison were called out on to the bastions. Hellichius, followed by the other officers, fresh from the banquet, advanced to the front, drew his sword, and said, "Distressing news has reached us from Stockholm that our most gracious King goes in terror of his life. Mindful of the time when he was your Colonel, he appeals to your protection; will you venture life and limb for him?" A unanimous "Yes!" burst from the whole company.

Hellichius then arrested the officers of the sappers and miners, who proved recalcitrant, seized the whole park of artillery, and broke off all communications with the outer world by raising the drawbridges. Toll took possession of the records and the military chest. He had now, at last, sufficient funds to fillip the zeal of the garrison and provision the fortress. But the revolt had not come any too soon; only a couple of hours after the fortress had closed its gates, the sentry at the southern entry sent word that an outrider from Governor-General Rudbeck, whom the Estates had sent as High Commissioner to the south, demanded admittance, and announced that his Excellency also might be expected within an hour. This piece of news fluttered the garrison pretty considerably. A council of war was immediately held to decide whether the august intruder was to be arrested or dismissed, and Toll, who feared, with some reason, that a man of Rudbeck's eminent authority would be dangerous even as a captive, counselled the latter course, and ultimately carried his point. The watch was therefore strictly charged to refuse admittance to the Governor-General, and answer all his questions in the negative.

The officer in command had scarcely time to place a corporal and twelve men in front of the lines when Rudbeck arrived upon the scene in a carriage-and-six. The postillions were driving so furiously that they could not stop at the challenge of the corporal, and were only brought to a standstill by the points of the bayonets tickling the ribs of the leaders, which plunged, swerved, and fell, dragging the middle pair after them. Rudbeck, who was dozing in a corner of his carriage, woke up, stretched his head out of the window, and began roaring at the postillions for their carelessness, but pulled a long face and dropped his voice when he saw that the impedi-

ment was a glittering line of bayonets. He desired to know who dared to bar the way against the plenipotentiary of the Secret Committee, and freely threatened all and sundry with the summary vengeance of that terrible tribunal. But the patrol, which consisted entirely of German soldiers, remained immovable, not knowing what he meant, while the corporal nodded his head like an automaton. Driven to desperation, Rudbeck finally got out of his carriage, and perceiving an artillery officer a little way off, beckoned him to approach, when the following dialogue ensued:—"Why are we refused admittance?" "I don't know." "Is there an invasion then?" "I don't know." "Who has the chief command in the fortress?" "I don't know." "Who are you?" "I don't know." "What's your name?" "I don't know." "Are you mad, man?" "I don't know." Rudbeck then tried a hectoring tone, whereupon the officer, losing patience, bluntly advised his Excellency to return from whence he came, or it might be worse for him. So the Governor-General turned his horses' heads round and proceeded to the village of Wåå, about a mile off, where he spent the evening in exhorting the puzzled rustics to watch over the national liberties, and expounded the mysteries of the Constitution to a blacksmith and an old farmer, who happened to drop in at the same tavern. The next morning he set off post-haste for Stockholm.¹

Meanwhile the youthful Prince Charles acquitted himself of this, his first military service, with the steady *sang-froid* of a veteran. The moment the news of the outbreak reached him at Landscrona, H.R.H. summoned all the resident officers and local magnates, and held a council

¹ The fullest account of this amusing colloquy is to be found in Toll's "*Biographisk Teckning*;" the scene in the inn is told by Fersen (*Anteckningar*), who is gleefully spiteful at the discomfiture of his political opponent.

of war. It was resolved that the Prince, at the head of the Scanian regiments, should immediately march upon the rebel fortress and closely invest it. Lieutenant Boltensstjerna was sent by the Prince to Stockholm to apprise the Government of the revolt, and of the measures taken to repress it. But he was secretly instructed not to hurry on his way, and a private letter to the King was sewn in his saddle. "All is in good order here," wrote the Prince. "This evening, or early to-morrow morning, I advance on Christianstad. To-day I am a Cap; the day after to-morrow I shall be a rebel. I confide in your Majesty's friendship. It is for your Majesty's sake that I risk life and liberty. I hope the end of this affair will correspond with the beginning. Should things go wrong, I hope your Majesty will not take it amiss of me if I retire in good order upon Hamburg, in which case your Majesty will perhaps be so good as to send me a draft."¹

The contingency so much dreaded by Sprengtporten had now actually arrived. Fortune, who is popularly credited with a preference for the valiant, seemed here to be taking the contrary part of the bravest of her sons. Sprengtporten had done all that human foresight could devise to fence the King about with props and stays against the hour of need. The hour of need had arrived, and Gustavus found himself isolated in the midst of his enemies. Sprengtporten lay weatherbound in Finland, and might just as well have been 10,000 miles away as 300. Saltza, of the Guards, who had been chosen at the last moment to take his place by the King's side, was bedridden with gout. Toll, so far from being able to help others, was in sore need of help himself. From the veteran statesmen of the Hat

¹ *Gustavanska Papperen.*

party no help was to be expected. Fersen, who, as Field-Marshal and Colonel of the Guard, should have been the first to draw his sword in favour of a revolution which he fervently desired and clearly foresaw, was hiding his head far away at his estate in Ostrogothland till the storm had blown over. Count Carl Scheffer, who for the last five years had been persistently goading on the King to acts of political incendiarism, had fled to his sea-girt castle of Tyresö, and lay there with one eye fixed on the capital and the other on the swift yacht, which was to convey him to the nearest German port in case of need. A handful of subordinate officers, whose devotion and ability had never been tested, was all that Gustavus had to depend upon, and his foes were now on the alert. General Rudbeck, who arrived at Stockholm on August 16, had the satisfaction of being the first to warn the Government of the outbreak of the insurrection in the south. A Cabinet Council was held at once, and the majority, stimulated by the English Minister, was of opinion that the King should be arrested forthwith. But Senator Funck pointed out that such a step was hazardous, especially as they had no proofs of his Majesty's complicity in the plot; so the Senate resolved to await further particulars, and, in the meantime, jealously watch every movement of the King. Gustavus, on the other hand, played his cards with consummate skill. When Rudbeck waited upon him to inform him of his own adventures at Christianstad, he found the King diligently employed in embroidering a girdle for one of the ladies of his Court. Gustavus listened to his story with well-feigned indignation, and expressed his gratitude with tears in his eyes, so that "the good old general," as Sheridan sympathetically calls him, "left the presence firmly persuaded that such an easy-going Prince was too frivolous to be harmful."

Later in the day, Boltenstjerna, Prince Charles's messenger, arrived at Stockholm, with an official account of the revolt, as well as of the measures taken by his Royal Highness to repress it. The Secret Committee was so well satisfied with his report, that it voted him a gratuity on the spot, little dreaming that he had already placed in the King's hands the secret letter that had been sewn in his saddle. A second Cabinet Council was then held, which lasted nearly all day, and it was finally ordered that the Upland regiments should be ordered into the capital to strengthen the garrison; that Senator Funck should take the supreme command of all the troops in Scania, while Senator Kalling should be appointed commandant of Stockholm; that Prince Charles should be thanked for his zeal and energy, but "as it was beneath his exalted rank to come to blows with rebels," he should be requested to return to the capital at once. All officers were ordered back to their regiments, and Fersen was to return immediately to resume the command of the guard. So far from thwarting these measures, the King displayed a cheerful alacrity in forwarding them. He did not miss a single debate in the Senate. He urged on the Secret Committee to redoubled energy. He signed everything that was laid before him, even to the order for his brother's recall. Then the Senate entreated his Majesty, as well for "the security of his sacred person" as for the more effectual protection of the Constitution, not to quit the capital, and his Majesty graciously complied with the wish of his Senate.

On the 18th, however, the Caps received fresh information, which again fastened their suspicions on the King. They now repented that they had let Boltenstjerna escape so easily, and an order was issued for his apprehension and examination by torture. Fortunately he was now beyond

their reach. A fresh attempt was then made to extract something from the King, and the redoubtable Pechlin demanded an audience for that express purpose, but could make nothing at all of Gustavus. Calm and unconcerned as he affected to be, however, the young King was a prey to the most poignant anxiety. Secret information had reached him that the Caps had finally determined to arrest and imprison him, as soon as the Uplanders arrived in the capital. His resolution was at once taken. He would strike the decisive blow himself without waiting for the arrival of Sprengtporten. But not a moment was to be lost. Within twelve hours Rudbeck's regiment would reach the capital, and, once there, a revolution would be all but impossible. Gustavus acted with military promptitude and precision. On the evening of the 18th, all the officers in the capital whom he thought he could trust received his secret instructions to assemble in the great square facing the Arsenal on the following morning. The difficulty of providing the rank and file with powder and shot was successfully got over by an expedient as simple as it was daring. Captain König, who was in the plot, went to Senator Kalling, the newly-appointed commandant of Stockholm, and affecting to fear a popular rising in the King's favour, suggested that the troops should be provided with ammunition. Kalling at once fell into the plot, and ammunition was doled out accordingly.

Gustavus had already addressed himself to the task of winning over the Burgher cavalry, which had been organised by the Secret Committee to patrol the streets every night. The King volunteered to accompany them on their rounds. The Senate, having an absolute confidence in this corps, naturally made no objection, and in the course of a couple of nights the fascinating young monarch completely converted to his cause the very men whom the

Estates had armed and trained to be the palladium of the Constitution.

On the night before the revolution the King gave a grand entertainment, to which all the notabilities of the capital were invited. Throughout the long evening the youthful monarch was the cynosure of hundreds of practised scrutinising eyes, but none could have guessed from his demeanour that he saw in every one of his guests either a spy or an accomplice. Never had the "royal charmer" seemed so charming. It was generally remarked that his Majesty was the liveliest, the gayest, and the most entertaining of the whole company. He flirted with the belles, capped the witticisms of the wits, improvised couplets, and gathered hilarious groups around him by sketching caricatures in his note-book. In the course of his rambles through the vast rooms, he strayed into the midst of a little coterie assembled around Senator Ribbing, and discussing with much animation the recent strange events at Christianstad. Gustavus, perceiving that many of the listeners eyed him curiously, and feeling constrained to say something to keep himself in countenance, observed that it was certainly very strange. "Yes," sneered Ribbing, "and the strangest part of it is that the officer on duty there told General Rudbeck that it had all been done by your Majesty's orders!"

"Pardon me," returned the King with wonderful *sang-froid*; "I also was present when General Rudbeck made his statement to the Senate, and I recollect very well that he said it was from a simple sentry that he got the information you allude to: an *officer* would have been better informed."

In the course of the evening the royal host regaled his guests with an entertainment worthy of an enlightened patriot-king. The Swedish opera of "Peleus and Thetis"

was performed in the palace theatre by a troupe of actors trained by the King himself. It was the first time that a Swedish audience had ever heard their soft and sonorous mother-tongue elevated and ennobled by sweet and tender music. Every one was enraptured, and the King, who was known to have revised and partially composed the libretto, tasted something of the triumph of a young dramatic author after a successful first night. In the interval between the opera and the banquet, the card-tables were set out, and the company sat down to play. The King's opponent was the Baroness Pechlin, the wife of his most dangerous enemy, and he was lucky enough to win a considerable sum from her ladyship. When the game was over he pocketed his winnings, remarking, with a smile and bow, that he meant to keep them as a souvenir of his fair adversary. Immediately after supper, Gustavus slipped away to his private apartments. On his way out, perceiving Rear-Admiral Tersmeden, a fellow-conspirator, standing by the door, he paused to exchange a few words with him, whispering hurriedly as he left him, "Now is the measure of iniquity full to overflowing! Be up to-morrow morning at nine o'clock."

For the next hour or so, Gustavus was engaged in sorting his correspondence and making his final preparations for the morrow. In a letter to his brother Charles, he solemnly adjured him not to avenge his death in case he fell, as he was persuaded the fatal blow could come from no Swedish hand. All the papers which could not be destroyed were placed in a casket, and sent, through Beylon, to the Spanish ambassador; for Gustavus had good reason to fear that, if the revolution collapsed, the French embassy would be as little respected by the vindictive Caps as the palace. But the King's most poignant anxiety was want of ready money. Vergennes had pro-

mised 10,000 ducats for the good cause. It was now long past midnight, and still not a sou had arrived. At the last moment, however, the faithful Beylon, now as always the guardian-angel of the royal family, arrived with 5000 ducats, which he had obtained, though only with the utmost difficulty, from the wealthy Dutch firm of Grill & Co., on the guarantee of the French ambassador. This amount was forthwith made up into purses for use in the morning. The King then drew up, with his own hand, the order for the arrest of the Senate: a scribe, locked in the royal closet, was, at the same time, copying out on vellum the royal draft of the proposed new Constitution. Then the King went out and accompanied the Burgher Guard on its patrol through the city. By the time he returned, the short night was well nigh spent, and, without undressing, he flung himself on a sofa and slept tranquilly till dawn.

The morning of the memorable 19th August broke warm and brilliant. The King was on his legs before any one in the palace was stirring. At six o'clock he received the Sacrament¹ from the hands of his Chief Chaplain, Dr. Carl Magnus Wrangel. On the previous evening the King had sent for Wrangel, and asked him whether a revolution could be regarded as a sin against God. Wrangel at once replied that it was certainly no sin if its only object was the welfare of the state, and with this answer the King expressed himself satisfied.

At ten o'clock Gustavus mounted his horse, and, followed by four attendants, rode straight to the Artillery Yard. He wore a plain blue coat with gold buttons, black hose and stockings, shoes with large oval silver buckles, and a plain three-cornered hat. His long hair, unpowdered, floated in the breeze. His only weapon was the sword by his side.

¹ "With the deepest reverence and the liveliest emotion," are Wrangel's own words.—*Svenska Kongl. Hof. Clereciets Historia*.

On the way to the Artillery Yard his adherents joined him in little groups, as if by accident, so that by the time he reached his destination he had about 200 officers in his suite. He greeted every one he met with his usual courtesy, and bowed repeatedly to the meanest of the people. From the Artillery Yard he proceeded to the Arsenal, by which time the number of his followers had increased perceptibly. After watching the usual morning manœuvres of the troops, the King inspected first the soldiers and then the officers, addressed a few friendly words to each, and then bade them march back to the palace. It had been arranged beforehand that if the King returned to the palace on foot, all the officers in his train should follow and assist him to carry out the revolution; but if he remounted, it would be a sign that the whole affair had been abandoned. When then the parade was over, the King turned to his suite and remarked loud enough for every one to hear, "As all these gentlemen go on foot, I may as well do the same," whereupon he walked back to the palace with his escort. Hitherto he had been in the best of humours, but it was now remarked that he walked with a downcast head and his hands clasped behind him, while his face wore a pensive, anxious look. On reaching the palace-yard,¹ the King entered the guard-room of the barracks with all his officers except Count Frederick Horn and Lars Hjerta, who were told off to arrest the Senate. The doors were then closed, and Gustavus unfolded his plans. At first he was very pale, and so agitated that he could scarcely speak at all. His voice was tremulous, his language incoherent, and when he stopped short in the middle of a sentence and looked around for encouragement,

¹ The story of the King's altercation with the Senate before the revolution began, which Fryxell and Schinkel have described so dramatically, may now be regarded as apocryphal. The best contemporary accounts know nothing of it.

he was met by a stony silence. But this chilling reception, so far from paralysing the speaker, seemed to transform him. His manner suddenly changed. With all the energy which the emergency demanded, he painted in vivid colours the unhappy situation of the country. In this extremity, he said, he turned to his faithful bodyguard. He would have them know that he abhorred despotism as much as any man, and now, as heretofore, regarded it as the greatest honour to be the first citizen of a free and uncorrupted people. "If," cried he in conclusion, "if you will follow me as your forefathers followed Gustavus Vasa and Gustavus Adolphus, I will venture my life-blood for the safety and honour of my country." There was a brief pause, and then Lieutenant Liewen cried, "Yes, we will venture our lives in your Majesty's service," a cry which was taken up by all the rest. There was one captain, however, a zealous Cap named Cederström, who held out. He was quite willing, he said, to shed the last drop of his blood for his Majesty if necessary, but he could not draw his sword against the Estates. The King regarded him sternly, and bade him think of what he was doing. "I do," replied Cederström, "and were I capable of breaking my oath to the Estates, I should likewise be capable of breaking that which your Majesty now requires of me." He then surrendered his sword to the King, who at once returned it to him. "I have too good an opinion of you," said Gustavus, "to imagine that you will ever make a bad use of it." Cederström then gave his word of honour that he would remain in the guard-room till all was over. The King then dictated the new oath of allegiance to one of his chamberlains, and everybody but Cederström signed it without hesitation. It absolved them from their allegiance to the Estates, and bound them to solely obey their lawful King, Gustavus III., and defend him and the new

Constitution which he promised to give them. The soldiers in the parade-ground of the palace followed the example of their officers, and received a ducat a-piece and six rounds of ammunition.

While all this was going on in the guard-room, the Senate, in another part of the palace, was debating about the instructions to be given to Senator Funck, the generalissimo of the south. Senator Wallwijk, who had not the least notion of military affairs, was sitting at the window watching the manœuvres of the guard in the courtyard below, when his colleague, Senator Kalling, requested him to take his place at the council-table to record his vote. Wallwijk, without moving from the window, replied that, from what he could see, the King was at that moment engaged in saving the Senate from the trouble of voting any more. Kalling, however, leaped to his feet and assured their Excellencies that they had nothing to fear, for he would go down and put matters right at once, whether the King was there or not. So down he went, and was not a little amazed and scandalised to find the door of the guard-room locked, and Ensign Hjerta with fifty grenadiers on guard in front of it. Kalling peremptorily demanded admittance.

"I want to see his Majesty on urgent state business, and that at once," said he.

"My Lord Count," returned Hjerta, "his Majesty will come to you in his own good time, and if I were you I should return to the place from whence you came as speedily as possible."

Kalling, much disturbed, took the hint, and close upon his heels followed Captain Aminoff with thirty of the guard, who locked the doors of the council-chamber and occupied all the avenues leading to it. Senators Ribbing and Falkengren were for bursting open the doors and rushing out

with drawn swords, but as two-thirds of the Senate were civilians, and little disposed to follow the martial example of their military colleagues, it ended by their quietly remaining where they were.¹

While the Senate was thus safely under lock and key, the Secret Committee was holding its last session at the Riddarhus, only a stone's-throw off. Suddenly some one said that something very unusual was said to be going on at the palace. Two deputies went out at once to make inquiries and returned with the intelligence that the Senate had been arrested, that the guard had proclaimed an absolute monarchy, and that the King at the head of a regiment of grenadiers was marching through the streets sword in hand. The priests and the burgesses at once made a wild rush for the door, the nobles followed suit, and in less than five minutes the Marshal of the Diet and his secretary were the only two persons remaining in the room.

Governor-General Rudbeck completely lost his head. He darted frantically about the streets, calling upon every one he met to defend liberty; but the populace, which was much more attached to the King than to the Riksdag, only laughed in his face. He then turned to the city militia and ordered them to fire upon the guards, although he knew that not one of them in ten had ammunition. Then he rushed wildly to the royal stables, where he found an ostler rubbing down a horse. His Excellency commanded the boy, in the name of the Estates, not to let the King have a mount; but the lad, who gaped at him in stupid amazement, replied that he only took his orders from the head-groom. Rudbeck next ran into a detachment of the Burgher cavalry, whom he exhorted to resist tyranny, narrowly escaped a sabre-cut for his pains, and then went home to dinner,

¹ We follow Fersen here, as he is much better informed than any other contemporary writer.

where a royal warrant for his apprehension came in time to prevent him from committing any further absurdities.

The only member of the Government who kept his head was General Pechlin. The first impulse of that astute politician, on hearing of the arrest of the Senate, was to hasten to the fleet, whose officers were Cap almost to a man. The fleet was moored along the quays of the Skeppsholm, one of the many islands on which Stockholm is built, and its guns commanded a considerable portion of the city. Had Pechlin reached the Skeppsholm in time, he would have been able to create a diversion in favour of the Estates, and either have altogether frustrated the royal plans or reduced Stockholm to a heap of ashes. But Vice-Admiral Tersmeden had already forestalled him, and, by a judicious blending of threats and promises, though not without some difficulty, had brought the officers of the fleet over to the King's side. Pechlin, perceiving that all was now lost in the capital, set off for the provinces with orders from the Senate in his pocket to collect his own and two other regiments in order to crush the revolt. Lieutenant Hjerta, who was at once sent after him by the King, overtook him at Södertelje, some twenty miles from Stockholm, and ordered him to surrender. Pechlin asked to see the warrant for his arrest. Hjerta replied that he had only verbal instructions from his Majesty, whereupon Pechlin produced his own commission from the Senate, signed and sealed, and threatened, in his turn, to arrest Hjerta, who returned in confusion to the capital empty-handed, while Pechlin went on his way unmolested.

Meanwhile, Gustavus was holding a triumphal progress through the city. Sinister rumours had spread like wild-fire that his Majesty's life was in danger, and the people, apprehensive for his safety, flocked in crowds to the palace. Then the northern gate was thrown open, and the King

appeared on horseback, sword in hand, surrounded by a crowd of officers and followed by his guard. Greeted with shouts of joy, he rode past the Arsenal, which was instantly occupied, to the Artillery Yard. Here he was met by a regiment of the Burgher cavalry, led by Brewer Rehn, who cried "God save the King!" and offered their services. Special messengers were now sent to Prince Charles and Prince Frederick (the King's youngest brother), giving them the chief command over their respective provinces. The latter was further ordered to secure General Pechlin at once, alive or dead.

The King had fixed his provisional headquarters in the Artillery Yard, and it was here that he first bound a white handkerchief round his left arm as a mark of recognition, and bade all his friends do the same. In less than an hour the whole city had donned the white handkerchief. It is said that Burgomaster Ekman, one of the most zealous of the Caps,¹ was artfully inveigled into wearing this Royalist badge. The King, happening to meet him, said, "Burgomaster Ekman, I am well aware of your fervid patriotism, surely then you will cheerfully do your best in promoting those measures which my zeal for the fatherland requires of me, will you not?" To such a very general proposition, Ekman could naturally only reply, "Yes." "Then," added the King with a smile, "I hope you will let me fasten on your arm the distinctive badge of those who are at once my friends and the friends of their country," and with that he tied the white token round the arm of the perplexed and hesitating Burgomaster. When then this notorious champion of freedom was seen leaving the Artillery Yard with the white handkerchief on, his political friends concluded that he had gone over to the King, and at once followed suit.

¹ Fryxell, who tells the story, says that he received it from one of the Ekman family.

Gustavus now ordered all the gates of the city to be closed, that the news of the revolution might not spread too rapidly, and had cannon planted in all the principal squares. The Uplanders, who were now within a few miles of Stockholm, received counter-orders to return, which they at once obeyed. After a visit to the Skeppsholm to distribute money among the sailors, Gustavus made the tour of the city, and so returned to the palace. Wherever he appeared, he was surrounded by enthusiastic crowds. At intervals he stopped to address a few words to the people, who hailed him as their deliverer and loaded him with blessings. Women knelt down before him and made their children kiss his feet. Men embraced one another with tears of joy. It was not so much a political revolution as a national festival. The triumph of the King was the felicity of the people.

After a hasty meal, the King invited the Diplomatic Corps to attend at the palace; the invitation was written on the back of a ten-daler note. The French ambassador at once obeyed, but the English and Russian Ministers hesitated at first, and only came on a second summons. When they were all assembled, Gustavus explained to them that the revolution had been forced upon him by circumstances, but that it would make no difference in his relations to foreign Powers, and he offered them apartments in the palace till the agitation in the city had subsided. The French ambassador replied in a strain of effusive gratitude. This was only natural. The Swedish revolution was the one diplomatic triumph of the long and disastrous reign of Louis XV., and coming, as it did, at the same time as the partition of Poland, was doubly welcome. The Russian and English Ministers, on the other hand, regarded the revolution with very different eyes. To them it was a serious rebuff, and

mortification was plainly written on their faces. Osterman was absolutely dumb. Goodrich merely asked permission to send a courier to London. Gustavus expressed his regret that he could not comply with his Excellency's request till the public security permitted him to re-open the city gates.

The same evening the captive senators were conducted to the apartments provided for them in the palace. As they passed through the grand saloon under a strong escort, they met the King, who approached them with a friendly smile, said that it was unnecessary to repeat to them his reasons for what he had done, and assured them of the continuance of his royal favour. He then permitted them all to kiss his hand.

During the night all the watches remained at their posts. The English and Russian Ministers are said to have made a fruitless attempt to stir up the fleet to a counter-revolution, and it was found necessary to place a guard round those Ministers' bankers. Fortunately, perfect tranquillity prevailed. Every one in the capital slept quietly except the King, who rode through the streets all night with a little escort to keep order. On the following day Gustavus sent a most gracious message to Fersen, who was all this time in his retreat in Ostrogothland. At first, indeed, the King had thought seriously of arresting that potent party leader, as likely to prove obstructive; but further reflection convinced him that such a measure was unnecessary, and therefore impolitic; so he addressed to Fersen one of those courteously caressing letters which only he could write, and begged the veteran patrician to hasten to the side of the youthful Prince Frederick, and assist him with his enlightened counsels. Fersen obeyed with alacrity, and his reply to the King on this occasion is characteristic. Gratitude

for the royal condescension, submission to the royal will, an affectation of humility, breathe forth from every line. "The commands of your Majesty," he concluded, "and the ever-memorable example you have given, will animate and enlighten H.R.H. far better than the counsels of one whose faculties have already begun to congeal beneath the icy touch of age."

Thus the old Government had been easily overthrown; but, till its place had been supplied by a new Government, the royal triumph, however complete, could scarcely be regarded as satisfactory. Gustavus did not keep his people long in suspense. His dictatorship only lasted three days, and two of the three were days of preparation for the reconconvocation of the Riksdag.

On the evening of August 20, heralds perambulated the city proclaiming that the Estates were to meet in the Rikssaal, or Hall of Congress, at four o'clock on the following day; every deputy absenting himself would be regarded as the enemy of his country and his King. Extraordinary and elaborate precautions were taken. All the principal thoroughfares were lined by battalions of the guard. The Rikssaal itself was surrounded by a park of artillery. One hundred grenadiers stood behind the guns with lighted matches. The report was circulated that Sprengtporten and his Finns were every moment to be expected, and quarters were prepared for them beforehand. Effectual measures were taken to prevent the deputies from concerting any plan of resistance or from even consulting one another. It was customary for the four Orders to assemble in their respective halls and thence proceed in state to the Rikssaal, the Land-Marshal and the three Talmen heading their respective Orders with their maces borne before them. This time-honoured procession was now forbidden, and the terrified mob of Riksdagsmen crept by twos and threes

into their places between rows of glittering bayonets. The downcast Caps were further depressed by the absence of their leaders, for the senators, who were wont on all such solemn occasions to stand round the throne arrayed in scarlet and ermine, were still under lock and key. A few minutes after the Estates had assembled, the King in full regalia, and attended by only a few officers, appeared and took his seat on the throne. After glancing round the hall, and striking the table before him thrice with his silver sceptre to enjoin silence, he thus addressed the expectant Estates :—

“Filled with the deepest grief at the condition of our common country, and compelled, with the realm tottering to its fall, to tell you the truth in all its nakedness, be not surprised if I do not greet you with that joyfulness which your presence before the throne has hitherto always excited within my breast. My heart cannot reproach me with concealing anything from you. Twice already have I spoken to you with all the sincerity my calling craved, with all the candour a nice sense of honour demanded. The same candour shall direct my words now that I am compelled to revert to the past in order to find a remedy for the present.

“It is a lamentable but undeniable fact that hatred and discord have long been playing havoc with the realm. The nation has long been divided between two factions, which separated her, so to speak, into two distinct races, agreed only in rending asunder their common country. You know how this schism begat bitterness, how bitterness brought forth vengeance, vengeance persecution, persecution fresh convulsions, till the malady, become chronic, ravaged and debased the whole framework of society. . . . When the letter of the law was plain, its spirit was perverted ; when it manifestly opposed the designs of the factions, it was

broken. Nothing was sacred in a community exasperated by hatred and wrong, and the climax of confusion was reached when it became an axiom that majorities are above all law, and have no other standard of right and wrong but their own caprices.

"Thus freedom, the noblest of human rights, degenerated into an insufferable aristocratic despotism in the hands of the ruling faction, which, in its turn, was cowed and curbed by a handful of its own members. The tidings of a new Riksdag was sufficient to make men tremble, and politicians . . . laboured only to create a majority for their own party, so as to shelter themselves from the lawless effrontery of their opponents.

"And if domestic affairs were in so desperate a condition, how hideous was not the situation of the country as regards foreign Powers! I blush to mention it. Born a Swede and a prince of Sweden, it should have been impossible for me to conceive that the hostile designs of foreign Powers could ever have been countenanced by Swedes. . . . You well know what I mean, and it is with the bitterest shame I now remind you of the infamy in which your dissensions have plunged your country.

"Such was the condition in which I found the realm when, by the will of the Most High, I inherited the Swedish sceptre. You yourselves can bear me witness that I have spared no pains to unite you. I have ever insisted . . . on the duty of obedience and concord. . . . I have sacrificed my personal feelings, my royal rights, to further that object; nothing seemed to me too grievous to be borne if only I might thereby gain an end so salutary to my country."

Here the King paused and exclaimed, "If there be any one here present who can deny the truth of what I

state, let him stand up!" The challenge was not accepted,¹ and after waiting for a few moments the orator thus proceeded:—

"I had hoped that my endeavours would have plucked from off you the fetters of foreign gold and domestic discord, but all was in vain. You were thoroughly perverted, not so much by those who led you, as by the vindictiveness which could listen to them. Every safeguard was overthrown, every covenant broken. Arbitrary violence had free course . . . and the just complaints of the people were treated as seditious brawlings. The Most High Himself seemed wrath at the iniquities of our rulers. The earth denied her fruits, and famine with sore distress visited the land." The King then briefly described the neglected sufferings of the starving people, and how the national distress had obliged him at last, when, humanly speaking, there was no other course open to him, to betake him "to those desperate remedies which have ere now saved so many a high-spirited people."

"You err greatly, however," continued he, "if you fancy that aught but freedom is here my aim. I have promised to rule over a free people. That promise is so much the more sacred as it was self-imposed, and what has happened now shall not turn me from a resolution founded, not upon necessity, but upon conviction. So far from assaulting freedom, it is only tyranny that I would abolish. I would convert the caprice by which the realm was ruled into an orderly and stable government. . . . This object cannot be gained unless the nation be submitted to an irrevocable law, equally binding upon the monarch and the Estates. Such a law . . . shall now be recited to you. . . . Monarchs of great, of deathless fame, have swayed

¹ Even Sheridan admits that the shame of a guilty conscience tied the tongues of the deputies quite as much as fear.

the sceptre which now is mine. It were something more than presumption on my part did I attempt in any way to compare myself with them, yet in zeal for your welfare I will venture to vie with them all; and if your hearts beat like mine for the fatherland, I hope and trust that the name of Sweden will ere long regain that honour and renown which she won in the days of our forefathers. The Most High God, before Whom all hearts are open, sees the thoughts of my heart at this moment. May His grace and His blessing rest upon you in your deliberations !'

It was near two hundred and fifty years since a Swedish Parliament had received such a reprimand from the throne. Gustavus Vasa, at the Riksdag of Vesterdaas in 1527, had certainly trounced the Estates soundly in language of brutal frankness and energetic coarseness. But those who listened to bluff King Gus were well aware that he spoke to them in his wrath, and therefore meant not half he said. They could listen to his reproaches without humiliation, for they knew that, at the bottom of his heart, he respected them as his valiant companions in arms. It was a castigation such as an angry father may administer to a beloved but wayward son : the pain is forgotten the moment the stick ceases to strike. Much more galling was the lecture which Gustavus III. addressed to *his* Parliament. He was scrupulously temperate in tone, but his very forbearance was intolerable. There was a reproach in every eloquent sentence, a sting in every stately period. His audience could not get away from the fact that their King regarded them as either dupes or traitors. It was the sort of rebuke which an indignant but indulgent master might inflict upon a trusted servant who has abused his confidence, and whom he finally overwhelms with the humiliation of an undeserved forgiveness.

When the King had finished speaking, he commanded that the new Constitution should be read to the Estates, after which, without allowing them a moment for deliberation, he put the question, "Do ye, for yourselves and your posterity, now solemnly engage, henceforth and for ever, to follow and inviolably conform to the law and Constitution which has just been recited to you?"—a question to which the Estates responded by a loud and unanimous "Yes!" thrice repeated. The four Presidents then stepping forward, subscribed the Constitution on behalf of their respective Orders, the King himself at the same time swearing to and subscribing a new coronation oath. When this was done Gustavus rose and said, "Inasmuch as it has pleased Divine Providence once more to knit together the old bands between King and people, let us now thank Him for so great a blessing!" then, reverently removing his crown, he beckoned to Archdeacon Lütke- man, afterwards Bishop of Wisby, to intone the *Te Deum*, in which the King joined with great fervour, the whole assembly following his example. This demonstration terminated the day's proceedings. The Riksdagsmen, after kissing the royal hand, dispersed.

The new Constitution, concise in expression though elaborate in form (it contained fifty-seven paragraphs), restored to the crown most of its ancient rights, and converted a weak and despotic republic into a strong and limited monarchy, in which the balance of power inclined, on the whole, to the side of the monarch. The King again became the fountain of honour and justice, the commander-in-chief of the forces, the sole medium of communication with foreign Powers, the head of the executive at home. He alone could now conclude or annul alliances and treaties; he only could coin money; he only could appoint and dismiss Ministers, including the Presidents of the four

Estates. The Riksdag could only assemble when summoned by him, he could dismiss it whenever he thought fit, and its deliberations were to be confined exclusively to the propositions which he might think fit to lay before it. But these very extensive powers were subjected to many important checks. Thus, without the previous consent of the Estates, no new law could be imposed, no old law abolished, no offensive war undertaken, no extraordinary war-subsidy levied. The Estates alone could tax themselves, they had the absolute charge of the Bank of Sweden, and the inalienable right of controlling the national expenditure. The person of a Riksdagsman was declared inviolable. Besides this, the King pledged himself never to alter his own Constitution without the consent of the Riksdag, never to leave the realm without the permission of the Senate, and to choose preceptors for his children agreeable to the Estates. The Senate, not the Riksdag, was the real loser by the change. It is true that, in the absence of the King and during the demise of the crown, *Rikets-Raad*¹—for it still retained its ancient historic title—was to carry on the government. It is also true that the King bound himself to consult the Senate on all momentous questions. But inasmuch as the Senators were henceforth to be appointed by the King and responsible to him alone, a Senate in opposition to the crown was barely conceivable. To sum up, the executive and judicial functions were vested in the King alone, the legislative belonged to the King and the Estates conjointly. The power of summoning and dismissing the Riksdag at will must have seemed a strange and horrible thing to politicians accustomed for half a century to paper kings; but, on the other hand, the Parliament held the purse, and this seemed a sufficient guarantee both of its independence and its

¹ Council of the Realm.

frequent convention. Finally, the new Constitution introduced many salutary and long-needed reforms. Thus, the abuse of justice, which had been one of the crying scandals of the *Frihetstid*, was remedied by those paragraphs which made the judges immovable, declared all malversations of justice capital offences, and abolished all extra-judicial tribunals as "instruments of tyranny and violence." The liberty of the subject was further secured by a Habeas Corpus Act, and it was hoped that the rancorous dissensions between the various Orders would be minimised by the clause which provided that no special privileges should be conferred on any one of the Estates without the consent of the other three.

On the same day on which the new Constitution was ratified, the imprisoned Senators were released and dismissed. Their very brief captivity had been light and even luxurious. The King had allotted to them the most sumptuous apartments in his palace, fed them from his own table, franked their letters, unopened, to their anxious families—in short, treated them more like guests than prisoners. Five of them were even re-admitted into the new Senate, the rest were compensated for the loss of the purple by lucrative court appointments. Never did king treat his opponents in a more kingly fashion.

The new Senate was what we should now call a Coalition Ministry, in which the talent of the nation was, for the first time for fifty years, adequately represented. It contained whatever of distinction and ability Sweden still possessed. Count Höpken, after an interval of eleven years, resumed his place at the council-board. The northern Tacitus had been reluctant to quit his groves and his books, but he found it impossible to resist a royal invitation which concluded with the words, "If I knew of an abler and more honest man in my dominions, I would

not disturb your well-merited repose." Even Fersen's hitherto invincible diffidence of the senatorial dignity was overcome by the King's blandishments, and he continued for a time to lend the lustre of his name to the royal councils. It is no reproach to Gustavus that eleven of the new Senators had been Hats and only five Caps, for both Hats and Caps had now ceased to exist. A royal proclamation had peremptorily forbidden the use of "those odious and abominable epithets," which had "smitten the land with the most hideous abuses ever known in a Christian community."

Meanwhile, the progress of the revolution in the provinces was as triumphant as it had been in the capital. The only member of the old Government who gave the King a moment's anxiety was General Pechlin. All that craft and courage could do for a badly-beaten cause was done by that intrepid intriguer. Disguised as a peasant, he made his way in a common cart, by circuitous routes, to the province of Smaaland, where his regiment lay, travelling nearly three hundred miles in five days. First he paid a flying visit to his country-house, burnt all compromising documents, composed and circulated an artfully-worded manifesto, which, without expressly inciting the populace to rise against the King, warned them to be on their guard against tyranny, and issued orders to eight squadrons of cavalry and six battalions of infantry to assemble and await his further instructions. Counter-orders from Prince Frederick and Fersen having frustrated this plan, he made a bold attempt, at the head of a handful of Cap officers, to seize the strong fortress of Jonköping. Had he succeeded, the consequences might have been most disastrous. With Jonköping in his hands, the road to Gothenburg, the wealthiest city in the kingdom, would have been open to him; and General Durietz, the commandant, was prepared

to open the gates to his friend and colleague Pechlin at the first summons. All communications between the King and Prince Charles would then have been cut off, a desperate civil war would have broken out in the heart of Sweden, and the foreign allies of the Caps would have had the opportunity of an armed intervention. Fortunately, the commandant of Jonköping had been forewarned, and Pechlin, falling into an ambuscade, was captured and sent a prisoner to Gripsholm, where not even his own wife was allowed to see him. In November, long after the revolution was over, he was transferred to Stockholm to be tried by court-martial, but it was found that the wily old general had taken all his measures with such infinite precaution that it was impossible to get at him. Gustavus thought for a moment of hanging him, but finally (12th January 1773) granted him a free pardon, whereupon Pechlin took the oath to the new Constitution, got back his regiment, and retired to his country-seat to tyrannise his peasantry and await "better times."

In Scania, Prince Charles, armed with a royal manifesto, had no difficulty in persuading all the officers under his command to swear allegiance to the new Government. The same day Christianstad opened its gates. The Caps throughout the province, surprised by the suddenness of the revolution, and overawed by the Prince's forces, remained perfectly quiet. Even in such a nest of Capism as Carlscrona there was no attempt at a rising.

At first Gustavus had felt some anxiety concerning Swedish Pomerania, which was in such uncomfortable proximity to his rapacious uncle, who had so long had his eye on that province. On the very night after the revolution, he wrote to his mother the famous letter in which he informed her of his success, at the same time giving her the chief command over all his German possessions. "I hope," he wrote, "that the King of Prussia will think twice

before attacking me, when he sees his own sister at the head of the government of Pomerania."

The public attention had been so engrossed by the events at Stockholm, that the prime mover in the revolution, Sprengtporten, seems to have dropped out of sight altogether; but the King, at any rate, had not forgotten him, and on hearing of the Finnish Colonel's arrival on the Swedish coast, Gustavus went out to meet him in the midst of drenching rain. He met the Finns a mile and a half from the capital, and after warmly embracing Sprengtporten in the presence of them all, dubbed him on the spot a Grand Commander of the Order of the Sword, a distinction hitherto jealously reserved for the highest officers of state.

When Sprengtporten re-entered the capital, he found the Estates on the point of quitting it. What they had been unable to accomplish in fourteen months under the old system, they had been compelled to do in fourteen days under the new. On August 26, the Estates had come together for the first time after the ratification of the new Constitution. Whatever may have been the secret sentiments of the dethroned deputies, their language in public breathed nothing but obsequious humility and edifying devotion. In the Estate of the Peasants proceedings began with the singing of the psalm, "See what a good and joyful thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Provost Westin, who, only a few days before, had raised both hand and voice against his sovereign, now full of loyal fervour, reminded his Estate in the words of Scripture that "Obedience is better than burnt-offerings, and to listen than the fat of bulls!" The Land Marshal delivered to the Nobility a long panegyric on "our great and patriotic King," who had "successfully restored the ancient and felicitous equilibrium between royal prerogative and popular freedom," and the Nobility unanimously voted an address

of thanks to the King for "saving them from themselves." The three lower Estates desired to be associated with the Nobility in this thank-offering, and the next day a deputation from all four Orders waited upon Gustavus with the congratulations of the Riksdag, at the same time craving permission to strike a medal commemorating the happy change, to which petition his Majesty graciously assented.

The propositions which the King now laid before the Riksdag related solely to the Budget and the currency, matters which could not be settled without the co-operation of Parliament. A committee of ways and means was at once appointed, and before the end of the month it was ready with its report. It proposed to grant the King the same amount of subsidies as the Estates had granted during the last Riksdag, when, as will be remembered, Parliament had been profusely liberal. The subsidies so granted were to continue to the end of the session of the following Riksdag. Funeral and coronation aids, extending over four years, and equal in amount to a third of the subsidies, were also granted. On the 6th September this report was laid before the Riksdag, and passed through all four Estates without a dissentient voice. On the following day the currency question was also provisionally disposed of by being left, on the motion of the Nobility, entirely in the hands of the King, who was humbly requested to take the proper measures in respect thereof, concurrently with the delegates of the Bank of Sweden.

Nothing now prevented Gustavus from "*blowing out*"¹ the Riksdag. On September 9, he came down to the Rikssaal, and dismissed the deputies to their homes in a speech which expressed his satisfaction with their conduct and his glad expectations for the future. In

¹ *Blaasa ut*. A flourish of trumpets always announced the dissolution of the Swedish Parliament.

six years, he said, he hoped to meet once more, in peace and tranquillity, the representatives of "a loyal and united, free and independent, noble-minded people." This unexpected promise to convene a Riksdag again within so short a time was a happy and skilful manœuvre, and produced a most favourable impression. A murmur of joyful surprise ran through the assembly. Satisfaction was written on every face.¹

Immediately after the dissolution Gustavus proceeded to distribute rewards among his friends and helpers. The royal princes received ducal coronets, Charles becoming Duke of Sudermania; Frederick, Duke of Ostrogothland. Sprengtporten was made a lieutenant-general, besides succeeding Fersen as Colonel of the Guard. All the *frälse* officers of the Finnish regiments received higher grades; all the *ofrälse* officers were made *frälse*. Trolle, Göran Sprengtporten, and Hellichius became colonels. The latter received, besides, a patent of nobility, and took the title of Gustafsskjöld.² Toll was the only prominent mover in the revolution whose services were not, at first, adequately rewarded; but his post of chief ranger was restored to him, and he was ennobled, with the right to represent his family in the Upper House.

The revolution of 1772 may be regarded as the ideal revolution of history. It was necessary, it was popular, it was salutary; yet, at the time, it did not cost the vanquished a single pang, or the victor a single regret. Not a drop of blood was spilt, and the only tears shed were tears of joy. Force of some sort is, indeed, of the very essence of such upheavals; but the force actually present in this revolution was rather in reserve than in action. The soldiers who followed Gustavus from one end of his capital to the other amidst huzzaing crowds

¹ Vergennes' dispatch to his Court.

² Gustaf's-shield.

seemed rather to be adding military pomp and circumstance to a popular pageant than effecting a *coup-d'état*. Gustavus went out of his way to be lenient. Many persons actually forced the King to arrest them. Even hostile critics, who attributed the revolution solely to the young monarch's lust of power, were constrained to admit that his humanity was even greater than his ambition.¹ He sent courteous, reassuring messages to the families of all his prisoners,² and apologies to the ladies whose slumbers had been disturbed by the applause which accompanied him on his triumphal progress. The faintest symptom of submission or acquiescence was met half way with the most engaging affability. The worst enemies of the King, who neither expected nor deserved mercy, had nothing more terrible to endure than a little badinage. Yet, after all, the revolution of 1772 was too much "a thing of beauty" to be a "joy for ever." What seemed to the contemporary observer its crowning merit was in reality its fatal defect. A critical operation cannot be performed without the free use of the surgeon's knife, and the most agonising pain is not too dear a price to pay for life itself. There are times when palliatives are only mischievous, when the most drastic remedies can alone save the diseased body politic from dissolution. It was so with the Swedish state in 1772. The effects of half a century of the most unbridled license, of the most penetrating corruptions, were not to be removed in a day, even by such a magician as Gustavus III. Sweden had to re-learn the very alphabet of the science of government. Instead, therefore, of restoring to his people the liberties

¹ He seemed "less anxious concerning the means of his enterprise than solicitous to prevent any, even the meanest of his subjects, from suffering the slightest injury."—*Sheridan*.

² Even the humble household of Parson Kröger was not forgotten.

which they could no longer use aright, he would have better counselled both his own and his country's interests if he had taken for a time the entire burden and responsibility of government upon his shoulders. Had Gustavus sacrificed sentiment to expediency, and established an absolute despotism for ten years or so, as Sprengtporten advised, the dynasty of the Vasas might still have been sitting on the Swedish throne. Sixteen years later, when his army mutinied on the field of battle, and his nobility made common cause with the enemy, the disillusioned monarch perceived his fatal blunder, and attempted, too late, to retrieve it. The *coup-d'état* of 1789 would have been unnecessary if the *coup-d'état* of 1772 had been more drastic, and but for the *coup-d'état* of 1789 Gustavus would never have fallen a victim to the bullet of Ankarström.

CHAPTER IX.

EFFECT OF THE SWEDISH REVOLUTION UPON EUROPEAN POLITICS, 1772-1774.

Condition of Europe—France—Prussia—Russia—Poland and Turkey—First partition of Poland—The Swedish revolution a check to Russia and Prussia—Frederick II.'s correspondence with Gustavus III.—Frederick's anxiety for peace—Attitude of Catherine II.—England refuses to co-operate with Russia against Sweden—Gunning at St. Petersburg—Cajoleries of Catherine—Courageous attitude of Gustavus—Denmark arms—Warlike preparations of Sweden—Enthusiasm of France at the Swedish revolution—Gives Sweden diplomatic help—Attitude of England—Her jealousy of France—Lord Stormont and the Duc d'Aiguillon—Martange's secret mission—Apparent inevitable rupture between France and England—Menacing attitude of Russia and Prussia—Alarm of Gustavus—Fresh outbreak of Turkish war secures the peace of the North.

THE 19th August 1772 had brought Gustavus III. forward from comparative obscurity into the front rank among contemporary potentates. The exploit of the young King of Sweden was in everybody's mouth. Speculation was curious as to what he would do next; Stockholm became, for a time, the focus of northern diplomacy, and Sweden, which had seemed about to drop altogether out of the Continental system, suddenly began to exercise a new and disturbing influence within that system.

Beneficial, however, as the revolution ultimately proved to Sweden, its immediate consequences seemed to threaten the very existence of the Swedish state. To all the neighbouring Powers, the *coup-d'état* at Stockholm had

come as a disagreeable shock; their first irritation took the form of an armed coalition, and the veterans of European diplomacy every moment anticipated the outbreak of a general European war. To understand, however, how such a purely domestic event as the Swedish revolution could nearly have set the whole Continent in flames, a rapid retrospect of the political history of Europe will here, perhaps, not be out of place.

Europe at this period was in a transitional state. Many of the Powers which were to control its future destinies were still forming; others, which had played a great part in the past, were breaking up and disappearing.

In the west, the most remarkable change was the decline of the French monarchy. For more than a century,¹ France had been indisputably the leading Continental Power. The adversities of her neighbours had been her prosperity. The terrible Thirty Years' War, which shattered Germany and sapped Spain, had left her without a rival. A vigorous, compact, populous, wealthy, and essentially bellicose nation, with practically invulnerable frontiers, midway between two deciduous states, could not fail to speedily become the arbiter of Europe, especially when her manifold resources were skilfully husbanded by a long succession of great statesmen. Unhappily, the government of France, vicious in principle and scarcely tolerable under the most judicious administration, treated her resources as if they were inexhaustible. The nation long and gallantly stood the unnatural and ever-increasing strain, but when the ruinously glorious era of Louis XIV. was succeeded by the ruinously inglorious era of Louis XV., it became pretty evident that the limit of endurance had at last been reached. Never before had France sunk so low as during the declin-

¹ Reckoning, of course, from the Peace of Westphalia to the Peace of Hubertsburg.

ing years of Louis XV. Bankrupt alike in arms and in diplomacy, her former prestige scarce sufficed to conceal the full extent of her impotence. The balance of power was now no longer to be sought in the west, but in the east of Europe, where two new Powers had begun to exercise a paramount influence. These two new Powers were Prussia and Russia.

The rise of the young Prussian monarchy is one of the most remarkable phenomena of the eighteenth century. When, in 1701, Europe, half contemptuously, permitted Frederick of Brandenburg to exchange his electoral coronet for a kingly crown, nobody imagined that the petty principality would, within two generations, threaten to overshadow all its neighbours. It was only when the deprecatory and pacific Frederick William I. was succeeded by the energetically aggressive Frederick II. that Prussia's neighbours took the alarm, and an apparently irresistible coalition was formed to crush out the insolent mushroom kingdom. The Seven Years' War began, and Prussia emerged from the fiery ordeal, not unscathed indeed, yet invincibly victorious. Once for all she had won her diploma of European citizenship.

Russia, like Prussia, was still at the beginning of her political career, although she could look back upon as many centuries as Prussia could number decades. But the nascent civilisation of Russia had been blasted in its first bloom by the terrible Tatar invasions of the thirteenth century, and for the next two hundred and fifty years the Tsars of Muscovy were the tributaries of a barbarous Khan. Gradually, beneath the guidance of shrewd but semi-savage princes, almost as terrible to their own country as to their country's enemies, the humiliating yoke was broken off. But the process of deliverance, painfully and laboriously slow, was repeatedly interrupted by many a

disheartening relapse. Even so late as the accession of Peter I. (1689), Russia, without a seaboard,¹ and separated from Western civilisation by the forests and marshes of Poland and Lithuania, was generally regarded as an Asiatic rather than as a European Power. The collapse (1719) of the short-lived Swedish Empire (1630-1719), by giving her the Baltic, gave her the lever of her future power; but it was reserved for Catherine II. (1762-1796) to assure her her natural frontiers and restore her to her proper place among the nations.

The condition of Russia's neighbours when Catherine ascended the throne was singularly favourable to the ambition of that aspiring Princess. In the north, Sweden, distracted by fiercely contending factions, seemed to have declined beyond the possibility of recovery. Southward stretched the unwieldy Ottoman Empire, not so very long ago the terror of Europe, but already stricken with that slow paralysis which, in our own days, has all but done its work. The vast intervening space between Sweden and Turkey was occupied by the territories of the moribund Polish Republic. That unhappy country, once the buckler, as Hungary had been the sword, of Christendom, had become little better than a public nuisance. For the last fifty years it had been the home of the most unmitigated lawlessness. The population consisted of a few thousand noblemen, who boasted that they were the freest freemen under heaven, and fifteen millions of serfs, who were as much the property of their lords as the cattle they tended. The two last kings had been foreigners and absentees, and the semblance of authority was vested in a Senate dependent upon the caprices of a hopelessly anarchical *Sejm* or Diet. Under these circumstances, every great

¹ The White Sea, closed to commerce, as it was, ten months out of the twelve, can scarcely be dignified with the name of a seaboard.

noble was a petty king in his own domains, and freedom, justice, law, and order had become the merest abstractions. Sweden, Turkey, and Poland all possessed territory which Russia claimed or coveted. Thus, her capital could never be secure while Sweden possessed Western Finland, and so long as the Tatar Khanates separated her from the Black Sea, and Polish Russia excluded her from the rest of Europe, she was, despite her undoubted progress, still confined to her native steppes. It was her policy, therefore, to forcibly interfere in the internal affairs of her weaker neighbours, and this policy was unflinchingly pursued by Catherine II. with cynical audacity and uniform success. The Peace of Nystad, whereby Russia had guaranteed the integrity of the Constitution of Sweden, afforded her a decent pretext of interference there, and the method she adopted was, as we have already seen, to support and subsidise the Caps. In Sweden, however, where France was her constant rival, her influence, at best, was precarious and fluctuating. In Poland, on the other hand, there was now no obstacle to her intrigues. One of the first acts of Catherine's reign was to place her former paramour, the elegant and highly-gifted but voluptuous and effeminate Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowsky, on the Polish throne (1764), and for the next eight years she had, with shameless persistency, fomented the disorders of that miserable country. An actual partition of Poland, however, seems to have been an afterthought,¹ and was probably (for there is still some doubt about it) suggested by Frederick of Prussia, who had even stronger motives than Catherine for partitioning the Republic. He could not pass from one part of his kingdom to the other without

¹ The Russian Chancellor, Panin, actually rejected the proposal when first mooted by Frederick. Russia was rather bent upon making Poland a vassal state. See Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii*, tom. xxviii., and the Polish historian Schmitt, *Panowania S. Augusta*.

making a long circuit through Polish territory, while the Polish port of Dantzic was the standing grievance of Prussian commerce. To round off and weld together his scattered domains, the acquisition of Ermeland and Pomerelia was absolutely necessary. The fear that Russia might absorb the whole of Poland was also a powerful motive with him. In 1768 the Porte, anxious for its own safety, demanded the withdrawal of the Russian troops from Poland, and the refusal of the Empress was followed by a declaration of war. But a series of brilliant Russian victories speedily brought the Turk to his knees, and Catherine began to talk about the re-establishment of the Greek Empire under a Russian Grand-Duke. Alarmed at these triumphs, Frederick II. offered his mediation, proposing at the same time that Russia should indemnify herself at the expense of Poland. The threatened hostility of Austria was overcome by admitting her into the iniquitous partnership. On February 17, 1772, the first partition compact was signed, the definitive treaty was concluded on August 5, and immediately afterwards the troops of the three Powers proceeded to take possession.

It was at this critical moment that the tidings of the Swedish revolution burst upon the Courts of Berlin and St. Petersburg, and no tidings could possibly have been more unwelcome. The Northern system, as conceived by them, had received a rude shock. Sweden had suddenly burst her fetters, and was henceforth to be reckoned with in all Northern complications. So clear-sighted a politician as Prince Henry of Prussia openly declared that, with her new Government and a ten years' peace, she could not fail to become a preponderating Power.

The letter in which Gustavus informed Frederick II. of what he had done was almost apologetic in tone. It was, as he himself expressed it, "the confession of a nephew to

his uncle," and it ended with the solemn assurance that Sweden's neighbours had nothing to fear from her. Frederick's reply was not encouraging. He reminded Gustavus that Russia, Prussia, and Denmark had guaranteed the overthrown Constitution; he prophesied terrible complications for Sweden in consequence, and was absolutely in despair to "see myself obliged to come forward as your Majesty's opponent."¹ Gustavus replied with dignity and spirit. He trusted, he said, in the justice of his cause and the attachment of his people. His uncle's friendship was dear to him, but still dearer was his uncle's esteem. If danger was at hand, he was prepared to follow the example set by his great kinsman when all Europe conspired to ruin him. "I will imitate you, my dear uncle," he concluded, "and you shall recognise your own blood." Fortunately for Gustavus, Frederick, for all his bluster, was really anxious to preserve peace. The contingency he most dreaded was a general European war, which could not fail to re-open the Polish question, by which he had gained so largely. He therefore moved heaven and earth to keep back the bellicose Tsarina from falling upon Sweden. But Catherine was not so easily pacified. She had been much disturbed by the news of the Swedish revolution. It was the first piece of ill-luck that had befallen her since she ascended the throne, and she at once gauged its real significance, and foresaw that henceforth Sweden would be her most dangerous and troublesome rival. But her wrath was dissembled and her conduct was diplomatic. Gustavus's messenger with the official announcement of the revolution was received coldly indeed, but not uncivilly, and in her

¹ Not a trace of this interesting correspondence is to be found in Carlyle's "History of Frederick the Great." The spectacle of the "philosopher king" striving to make his kinsmen fugitives and vagabonds would naturally be out of place in a panegyric. Carlyle merely says that Frederick was alarmed, and for the moment angry, at the Swedish revolution.

curt reply to her royal cousin she simply expressed the hope that the peace of Europe might still be maintained. At the same time she rejected all the pacific advances of Gustavus; eagerly listened to the proposal of the King of Prussia that Russia, Prussia, and Denmark should present a joint-note to Sweden insisting on a change of government; vigorously prepared for war, and set the whole machinery of diplomacy in motion against the Swedish monarch. The Danish Court received secret, peremptory, orders from St. Petersburg to equip a fleet in the Sound and marshal an army on the Norwegian frontier. Czernichev was sent to Finland to put the border fortresses on a war footing, and detachments of troops were transferred from the marshes of Lithuania to the shores of the Baltic. Catherine also counted upon the active co-operation of England, and not without some reason; but it very soon appeared that the views of the Cabinets of St. James's and Tsarkoe Selo on the Swedish question were materially different. Since the partition of Poland, the English Government had begun to suspect the purity of the Empress's intentions, and the subsequent seizure of the free port of Dantzic by the King of Prussia wounded Great Britain in her tenderest point by seriously interfering with her Baltic trade. Jealousy of Frederick II.'s influence at the Russian Court was, however, the secret of England's estrangement from the Tsarina.¹ The English Minister at St. Petersburg, Mr. Robert Gunning, received strict instructions to keep his eyes and ears open, and energetically discountenance any active interference in the domestic affairs of Sweden. The Russian Chancellor, Nikita Ivanovich Panin,² who for the last ten years had directed Russia's foreign policy with

¹ *Sbornik Imperatorskago Russkago Istoriskago Obischestva*, tom. xix. Compare Raumer, *Beiträge zur neueren Geschichte*.

² See *Materialui dlya zhizneopisaniya gr. N. P. Panina, 1770-1857*. *Isdanie A. Brikhner*, an invaluable document for the history of the period included.

unvarying success, and had made Sweden his speciality, exhausted all his art to overcome the reserve of the English ambassador. From September 1772 to December 1773 Gunning was continually besieged by proposals for an anti-Swedish alliance, or at least for a defensive alliance with Denmark; but Gunning, with equal resolution, declined to either assist Denmark or attack Sweden. The constancy of the English ambassador, however, was soon put to a harder proof. The Empress herself, who very rarely negotiated directly with the foreign Ministers, tried the effect of her fascinations upon the inflexible Englishman in the gardens of Tsarkoe Selo,¹ but all in vain. Nothing came of her blandishments and her favours. The ambassador was amiable but immovable, and do what she would, she could not persuade the English Government to depart one hair's-breadth from the strictest neutrality.²

But while the resolute non-intervention of England was a severe check to Catherine, and therefore a distinct benefit to Gustavus, it was nevertheless little more than a fortunate accident. The independence of Sweden and the tranquillity of the North mainly depended upon the conduct of the new Swedish Government, and it is only fair to add that that conduct was marked throughout by equal tact and courage. Its language was conciliatory, pacific, even apologetic, but it was spoken in a tone equally dignified and resolute. Gustavus and his Ministers had every reason to desire peace, but they did not shrink from the ordeal of battle, and

¹ Gunning's dispatch of June 4, 1773, contains a full account of this interview. *Sbornik*, tom. xix. No. 175.

² Catherine, however, had her revenge. On the outbreak of the American war, the English Government, relying on previous benevolent expressions of amity on the Empress's part, asked for the aid of 20,000 troops to restrain "the increasing frenzy of his Majesty's unhappy and deluded people on the other side of the Atlantic," and a draft treaty to that effect was actually sent to Gunning. Catherine, however, received the proposal very coldly, explained away her former promises, and in a letter to George III. politely but decidedly declined to interfere in the matter. *Sbornik*, tom. xix. No. 127.

were resolved to endure everything rather than make the smallest concession affecting the national honour or independence. The southern and western frontiers and the transmarine possessions of Sweden were hastily secured against a sudden attack, and while Gustavus himself wrote to Louis XV. for assistance, the practised pens of Chancellor Scheffer¹ and Senator Höpken were employed in the diplomatic encounter with the King of Prussia.

But Gustavus was not content with the slow and circuitous methods of diplomacy; he felt strong enough to terrify the nearest and most detested of his numerous foes by a military demonstration.

Of all Sweden's neighbours, Denmark-Norway had most reason to be alarmed at the recent revolution. A strong monarchy in the hands of the hostile Holstein-Gottorp family was the very contingency against which Russia and Prussia had intended to protect Denmark by the secret article of the treaty of 1769 already referred to. By a subsequent treaty with Russia, moreover, Denmark had undertaken to arm whenever the power of the Swedish crown should be enlarged at the expense of the Estates, and thus, so far as Denmark was concerned, a *casus fœderis* had incontestably supervened. Accordingly, Denmark at once began to arm, and active preparations were made for a descent upon Sweden from Norway. The Swedish Government thought it expedient at first to affect unconcern; but Gustavus suddenly resolved to endure Denmark's armaments no longer, but demand an explanation, sword in hand. This resolution was as prudent as it was spirited. It was necessary to silence Denmark while Russia was still unable to assist her, and extort from the

¹ Ulrik, the brother of Gustavus's old governor. As Chancellor, during the next decade, he successfully steered Sweden through one of the most serious crises of her history.

Danish Court assurances from which it could not afterwards depart without dishonour. The prestige of Sweden, moreover, could not fail to be greatly raised by such a step. At a Cabinet council held at Ekholmsund it was resolved that an ultimatum should be dispatched to the Danish Court demanding a cessation of the Danish armaments, and that a Swedish army corps should be mobilised at once on the Norwegian frontier. All the Swedish regiments were then placed upon a war footing, twelve tons of gold were borrowed from the Bank of Sweden on the security of the next French subsidies, and, on November 7, Gustavus quitted Stockholm to make a general inspection. He was accompanied by the brothers Sprengtporten; Toll had been previously dispatched to the frontier to collect information. The King, on the eve of his departure, had an interview with the French ambassador, who, seriously alarmed at the aspect of affairs, most earnestly warned Gustavus to be careful and moderate. The King proceeded all the way from Örebro to the frontier on horseback, although the weather was cold and tempestuous. At Christianshaven he received the answer of Denmark, which was pacific, and even obsequious. In fact, the Danish Court, impressed by the vigorous counter-armaments of Sweden, and much disturbed by the approach of the Swedish monarch, was ready to give any and every satisfaction, and promised to discontinue its armaments at once. The Danish note was submitted to a council of generals and statesmen at Carlstad, who regarded it as satisfactory, whereupon Sweden also disarmed, and Gustavus, though very reluctantly, sheathed his maiden sword.

But the courage and constancy of Swedish statesmen were not a little stimulated by the knowledge that behind them stood zealous and potent allies who were prepared to risk a European war on their behalf. In France the

tidings of the Swedish Revolution had been received with a burst of enthusiasm which gave momentary vigour to a decrepit Government, and awoke a nice sense of honour and duty in the breasts of the most degraded statesmen of the eighteenth century. The Court of Versailles was naturally enchanted at an event which was really the solitary diplomatic triumph of the long and disastrous reign of Louis XV., while Paris, still enamoured of the King of Sweden, ran wild with joy. Creutz, the Swedish Minister, was embarrassed by the heaps of congratulatory letters he received every day from people of all ranks and classes, while the royal courier, Baron Lieven, who appeared in Paris with the white handkerchief round his left arm, received a perfect ovation. The aged Voltaire celebrated the success of his young admirer in a triumphal ode,¹ and re-adapted his latest dramatic satire, *Les Lois de Minos*,² to suit the Swedish revolution. The Encyclopedists, following the example of Voltaire, sang in chorus the praises of the King of Sweden, and the French Academy unanimously resolved that the portrait of the "Northern Titus" should adorn the walls of its grand salon. Even the apathetic Louis XV. was moved to tears by Gustavus's letter, and desired that Creutz should be raised to the rank of ambassador. The French Premier, the Duke d'Aiguillon, still smarting from the Polish disgrace, welcomed the Swedish affair as an opportunity of retrieving his reputation, and the championship of Sweden became the keynote of the foreign policy of Louis XV.'s declining years. All the credit that France still possessed was freely employed with this one

¹ It began—

"Jeune et digne héritier du grand nom de Gustave,
Sauveur d'un peuple libre et roi d'un peuple brave!"

² This dramatic squib was meant originally to ridicule Stanislaus of Poland, but Voltaire now explained that the insolent Mérione represented "ce pauvre Rudbeck," and the fanatical high-priest, Serenius, Bishop of Strengnäs.

object. Durand, one of her ablest diplomatists, was sent to St. Petersburg to mollify the Empress and undermine the credit of the King of Prussia. The Court of Copenhagen was plainly informed that France would brook no interference in the domestic affairs of Sweden. The Prince de Rohan, the French ambassador at Vienna, informed Kaunitz that France was determined to support Sweden, if attacked, by force of arms, and required a definite declaration as to which side Austria was prepared to take. Spain, moreover, was persuaded to go hand in hand with France, and De Lacy, the Spanish ambassador at Stockholm, was transferred to St. Petersburg to support Durand.

But the principal efforts of the French Ministry was directed to winning over the English Government. Everything indeed depended upon the attitude of Great Britain. If Russia was unable to attack, still less was France able effectually to defend Sweden without the co-operation of that great maritime power. It was not enough that France had already concluded a new subsidy treaty with Gustavus, whereby the Court of Versailles engaged to pay Sweden 2,400,000 livres in three yearly instalments, to enable her to place her forces on an active war-footing. In December 1772, matters wore such a threatening aspect, that the French Government seriously considered the best mode of rendering Sweden military as well as diplomatic assistance. D'Aiguillon's first idea was to dispatch a corps of 12,000 German troops in the spring of 1773 from Dunkirk to Gothenburg. This corps, which, to avoid wounding English susceptibilities, was to be conveyed in transports to the Scaw, and from thence escorted to Gothenburg by a Swedish squadron, was to be employed against Denmark, thus enabling Sweden to reserve all her own troops for the anticipated contest with Russia. But this proposal was

unfavourably received at Stockholm. There it was thought that this auxiliary corps would be of little service unless accompanied by a strong fleet, which might enable Sweden to hold the Northern Seas against the combined navies of Russia and Denmark ; and it was hoped that England would even support France in maintaining the balance of power in the North, especially as England's suspicious dislike of the Russo-Prussian alliance was notorious. But it soon appeared that England's ancient and hereditary hatred of France was far stronger than her actual and temporary jealousy of Prussia. On March 31, 1773, when the Northern crisis was at its acutest stage, D'Aiguillon had that celebrated interview with the English ambassador, Lord Stormont, of which the latter has left us such a graphic description.¹ D'Aiguillon opened the ball by informing Stormont that there could no longer be any doubt that Russia and Denmark were on the point of attacking Sweden, and he declared that it passed his comprehension how England could regard the repeated aggressions of Russia with such indifference, and that it was the duty of France to prevent Sweden from being sacrificed. Stormont replied that England's line of action would depend on the *way* in which France assisted Sweden, and there was *one* way she could not tolerate for an instant. A French squadron in the Baltic must necessarily and unavoidably be followed by an English squadron. D'Aiguillon not unnaturally requested to know how then the King of Sweden was to be assisted. Stormont suggested subsidies, to which D'Aiguillon contemptuously replied that to simply subsidise Gustavus would only be another way of sacrificing him. The young monarch, he added, had completely won the hearts of the French King and the French people,

¹ A full account of this interview is contained in Tegnér's *Om Sveriges yttre politik efter Statshvålfning*. Compare also Raumer's *Beiträge*, Thl. v. Bd. 3.

and could not and should not be abandoned. "No, my lord," exclaimed the Duke passionately, "if I left him in the lurch, I should not dare to show myself in the streets of Paris." From entreaties D'Aiguillon then proceeded to threats, and declared that, in case of war, France could equip twenty line-of-battle ships within a month ; but this produced no effect whatever on Stormont, who simply observed that the English Admiralty would certainly not be a whit behind the Admiralty of France in energy and dispatch ; and when D'Aiguillon suggested, by way of concession, that he was prepared to land the proposed auxiliary troops on the west coast of Sweden, so as to avoid the Baltic altogether, the English ambassador haughtily replied that in this case the Baltic included the North Sea also.

But the imperious language of the English ambassador was really due rather to the anxiety of the tottering English Government to stand well with the constituencies than to any peculiar hostility to France. This is sufficiently obvious from the remarks made by Lord Rochford, the Foreign Secretary, to General Martange, one of those many secret diplomatic agents whom Louis XV. had such a passion for employing behind the backs of his responsible Ministers.¹ Martange was sent to England a few days after D'Aiguillon's interview with Stormont, for the purpose of overcoming the repugnance of English statesmen to the dispatching of a French fleet to the Baltic. Lord Rochford frankly confessed to Martange that, under the circumstances, he should regard a war with France as simply suicidal on the part of England, and suggested, as a way out of the difficulty, either that England should delay her armaments till those of France

¹ See Broglie, *Le Secret du Roi*, tom. ii. Compare Boutaric, *Correspondance Secrete de Louis XV.*

were too far advanced to be stopped, or that the French auxiliaries should be conveyed to Sweden on English men-of-war, so as to have the English fleet without a rival in the Northern Seas. French pride revolted, however, at the latter alternative; and when it was found that "not all the eloquence of Cicero or Demosthenes" could move the English Government to permit a French fleet in the Baltic, the proposed French auxiliary squadron was dispersed. A fresh squadron, however, was hastily equipped at Toulon, which, under the pretext of manœuvring in the Mediterranean, was to effect a diversion against Russia in favour of Turkey, and thus indirectly assist Sweden; but Stormont immediately informed D'Aiguillon that the English Government would as little suffer the French flag to wave in the Mediterranean as in the Baltic, even if a thirty years' war was to be the inevitable consequence. Thus all the efforts of France to form an alliance with England had had the contrary effect, and a war between the two Western Powers seemed inevitable, when the course of events in the North enabled France to return her sword to its sheath without too much humiliation.

The immediate consequences of Gustavus's bold move against Denmark were highly alarming. The very completeness of Gustavus's success defeated its object, for it plainly showed that Sweden, under her new Government, felt herself to be stronger than she had ever been under the old one, and a strong Sweden was the contingency which Russia and her allies feared most of all. So Frederick II. renewed his warnings and his menaces, and Catherine hastened on her armaments. All through the winter of 1772-73 Russia and her allies were maturing their plan of attack. Nothing less than a partition of Sweden was now aimed at. Russia, Prussia, and

Denmark intended, early in the spring, to present a joint-memorandum to the Swedish Government demanding a modification of the existing Constitution and the summoning of a Riksdag. A refusal was instantly to be followed by a declaration of war. A Russian fleet was to blockade Stockholm; a Danish fleet was to be stationed in the Sound to cut off all communication with the West; a combined Russo-Danish fleet was to blockade the Swedish fleet in Carlsrona. Sweden was then to be attacked simultaneously from three sides. Russia was to fall upon Finland, Prussia was to annex Pomerania, and a Danish army was to invade Sweden from Norway. The rouble was to co-operate with the sword. All who could be bribed were to be bribed liberally. Many Swedish civilians were actually in Osterman's pay, and he knew exactly where to place his hand upon his "friends." He was particularly sanguine as to the officers of the army, and confidently predicted that, in the event of a war, at least half the army would desert the King. As the spring of 1774 advanced, the news from St. Petersburg became more and more alarming. Ribbing, the Swedish Minister there, wrote that Sweden ought to be prepared for the worst. War appeared to be imminent, and on March 15 Gustavus held a privy council at Ulriksdal, at which the four most experienced soldiers in the State were present; it was, in fact, a council of war. The King candidly laid before the council the condition of things, and it was ultimately resolved that the elder Sprengtporten should at once be sent to Finland¹ as Commander-in-chief; that 10,000 men should be sent across the Gulf of Bothnia as speedily as

¹ It was on this occasion that Sprengtporten had his first quarrel with the King, whom he never could forgive for having forestalled him in carrying out the revolution. His conduct was outrageously insolent, and nothing in the world would induce him to go to Finland.

possible, and the fleet held in readiness against Denmark. Immediately after the council of Ulriksdal, Gustavus lost one of his chief councillors. The critical moment when Sweden needed all her strength for the life and death struggle that lay before her, was the infelicitous occasion chosen by Count Fersen to resign his chair in the Senate. "Declining years and increasing infirmities" were the ostensible, pique and jealousy were the real, causes of this shameful dereliction of duty. It was the beginning of a system of opposition on Fersen's part which was to shake the throne and imperil the very existence of the nation.

As the King had anticipated, Fersen's mischievous example found speedy imitators. Pechlin was one of the first to resign his commission. It was the only service he could now render to Russia, and he rendered it cheerfully. A general rush of resignations followed, chiefly of officers in the army; the disaffection there was even more wide-spread than the Russian Minister had dared to hope. Under these circumstances, it was incontestably the King's best policy to try and preserve peace. On March 19, 1774, the Swedish Chancellor invited Osterman to a fresh conference, and solemnly assured him that the military preparations of his master were simply defensive and precautionary, and that Sweden was ready to disarm as soon as Russia set the example. A fortnight of the most anxious uncertainty followed, but then all doubts as to the maintenance of peace were suddenly and completely dispelled by the arrival of a pacific note from the Russian Chancellor, Panin, thanking the King for the assurances he had conveyed to the Empress, who had, he said, no intention of molesting her good friend and cousin. This sudden change of tone was due to no regard of the Tsarina for the King of Sweden, still less to any belief in his promises, but simply and solely to the unexpected turn which Turkish

affairs had taken. The second peace conference at Bucharest (October 1772–March 1773) had proved as abortive as the conference of Focsani three months before. War again broke out, and the brilliant Turkish victory at Rustchuk showed that even in the fifth year of the war the power of the Sultan was still very far from being exhausted. Thus Russia, with her hands full in the South, was anxious to avoid simultaneous complications in the North, and so Sweden was spared for a time. That Russia had, however, only postponed, not abandoned, her designs upon Sweden, is plain from her contemporaneous dealings with Denmark. In March 1773, the Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Von Osten, was succeeded by the energetic philo-Russ, Count Andreas Peter Bernstorff (after Griffenfeld, Denmark's greatest statesman), the first act of whose long and brilliant diplomatic career was the secret treaty of Tsarkoe Selo with Russia. By this treaty, the Grand-Duke Paul surrendered his Holstein possessions to the King of Denmark, in return for Oldenburg and Delmenhorst. On August 12, 1774, a fresh secret offensive and defensive alliance was signed at St. Petersburg between the two Powers, in which the Swedish revolution of 1772 was significantly described as an "act of violence," constituting a *casus fœderis* which justified both Powers in continuing their armaments, and seizing the first favourable opportunity for intervening. This secret treaty, which was intended to fix the Northern system once for all, was a standing menace to the independence of Sweden, and a clog upon the energies of Gustavus for the next eighteen years, till the signal victory of Svensund reduced it to so much waste paper.

CHAPTER X.

THE WORKING OF THE NEW SYSTEM IN SWEDEN.

Difficulties of the King—His popularity—He abolishes torture and establishes the freedom of the press—Regulation of the currency—Gustavus discovers Liljencrantz—His greatness as a financier—His plan for regulating the currency—Opposition of the Senate—Gustavus makes him Finance Minister—The Swedish currency at this time—Success of the realisation—Regulation of the finances—Liljencrantz's project for making the distillation of spirits a royal monopoly—Great unpopularity of the measure—Reform of the Judicature—J. V. Lilijskraale's drastic inquisition—Impeachment of the High Court of Justice—Military reforms of Gustavus—Deplorable state of the national defences—The *Indelning* system—The *Accord* abuse—It is abolished—Count Carl Sparre—His genius as an organiser—Is made War Minister—Navy reform—Ehrensward, Trolle, and Chapman—The King's rupture with the Sprengtportens.

SECURE at last, though not for long, from foreign interference, the young monarch was now free to throw himself heart and soul into that ambitious plan of reform which was the necessary consequence of the revolution, and, we may add, its most triumphant vindication. A fairer and wider field for an ardent and capable young reformer than that presented by Sweden in 1772 is scarcely imaginable. Half a century of misrule had deranged the whole machinery of government, given the license of prescription to the worst abuses, and brought the State to the very verge of economical, financial, and political bankruptcy. On the other hand, if the King's difficulties were extraordinary, his abilities were not less so. Few rulers have been more prodigally endowed

than Gustavus III. A penetrating and subtle intellect, a vivid imagination, a natural, insinuating eloquence, a phenomenally retentive memory, a marvellous intuitive knowledge of human nature, and an immense capacity for work of all sorts—these were the strong points of the King. That this versatile, many-sided nature did not fulfil all its promises is due partly, no doubt, to the effects of a vicious and one-sided education, but partly also to the restraint of adverse circumstances. Gustavus III. owed little to fortune; on the whole, the fickle goddess was rather his foe than his friend, though his dexterity often succeeded in ravishing her unwilling favours. But at the beginning of his reign, at any rate, she was on his side, and she gave him a gift, the lack of which has so often condemned the most ambitious energy to idleness—the gift of popularity.

Rarely, if ever, has any ruler been the object of such universal admiration as was Gustavus III. in 1772. Public opinion was unmistakably with the King. Through the whole length and breadth of the land, from the peasant's hut to the magnate's castle, the new Constitution was extolled as a special favour of Providence. The press, the pulpit, and the academic chair were equally eulogistic. The administration of the new oaths was a signal for festivities of every kind. Indeed, the public joy bore throughout rather the character of Southern vehemence than of Northern phlegm.

Nor were the sanguine expectations of the people altogether disappointed. The first two measures of the Government, the abolition of torture and the establishment of freedom of the press, showed that it held a liberal and progressive programme.

| The barbarous and senseless practice of employing torture as an instrument of judicial investigation, though pretty general throughout Europe at the end of the eighteenth

century, had never been recognised by Swedish law. Neither the austere Charles XI. nor the saturnine Charles XII. in the plenitude of their absolute power had thought of such a thing. It was only when the *Frihetstid* came in, with its secret persecuting committees and its extra-judicial tribunals, that the abominable novelty first became a Swedish institution. We find it chiefly employed to extort self-incriminating confessions from political opponents, and it very soon became indispensable to that faction-ridden age. The scene of these judicial atrocities was usually some subterranean cellar or other equally obscure den, such as the *White Horse* and the *Rose Chamber* in Stockholm. By order of Gustavus all these infamous holes were either pulled down or walled up, the instruments of torture were destroyed or exhibited in museums, and torture itself was declared for ever abolished.¹

2 The liberty of the press was a more difficult question. England was, at that time, the only country in the world where a free press was considered compatible with a strong and secure Government. Even such enlightened despots as Frederick II. and Joseph II. were, on this point, false to their philosophic creed. Nay, even in republican Switzerland, Weltheim was prosecuted for his geography, and Freudenbergs "Tell" was burned by the common hangman. The subject of a free press was first discussed by the King in council on April 18, 1774. The Senate was of opinion that it was inexpedient to revive the free press ordinance of 1766, which had been the chief glory of the Cap rule, and Senator Höpken supported this view with the most cogent arguments. He was in favour of a limited censorship, and regarded an absolutely free press as unworkable in Sweden just then. But the enthusiastic

¹ A full account of these horrible holes will be found in Geijer's "*Teckning af Frihetstiden*." Compare also Beskow's *Gustaf III.* and Fryxell's *Berättelser*.

young King, impatient of half-measures, thought otherwise, and argued¹ at great length that, though liable to abuse, freedom of the press was not mischievous *per se*, and the press ordinance of 1766, with some slight alterations, was therefore re-established by royal decree. Gustavus held himself in honour bound to send his free-press ordinance in Swedish and French, with a translation of the antecedent deliberations, to Voltaire. "It is you," wrote the monarch to the sage on this occasion, "that humanity has to thank for the destruction of those obstacles which ignorance and fanaticism have opposed to its progress."

3 The regulation of the currency was the King's next care. Although Gustavus had no great liking for figures, he was clear-headed enough to perceive that no lasting improvement in trade or the finances was conceivable until the currency was raised from its deep debasement. He also felt that nothing was better calculated to strengthen the new Government than the successful solution of a problem which the Estates, after a trial of thirty years, had abandoned as hopeless. He began by appointing a commission of six experts to report on the subject. Five of these commissioners were men of great experience, but the school of economics to which they belonged had had its day, and was fast becoming obsolete; but the sixth commissioner, Westerman, was a man who deserves a little attention.

Johan Westerman, the Swedish Colbert, came of an ancient stock remotely connected on the distaff side with the royal line of Sweden. Johan was born at Gefle in 1730, and, after enjoying the best education which Sweden could

¹ Some of Gustavus's remarks on this subject are most interesting. The commotion caused by the Wilkes affair in England was, in his opinion, attributable "rather to the indiscreet attention which the Government gave to his [Wilkes'] productions (which, like so many others of the same sort, would have been speedily forgotten if let alone) than to the mere fact of their having been printed."

then afford to her sons (and by his own account that best was bad enough),¹ entered the civil service, immediately attracted attention, and at twenty-six was appointed the secretary of a Government commission for inquiring into the state of trade and manufactures. His financial knowledge was considerably enriched by two subsequent foreign tours, and as a reward for his reports on these occasions he was made a Councillor of Commerce and a Royal Academician, and in 1768 was ennobled, taking his better known name of Liljencrantz. Liljencrantz possessed, to a very high degree, the audacity of genius: he did more, because he risked more, than most men. His honesty and disinterestedness, however, were equal to his genius, and the Minister (for, as we shall see, it was reserved for Gustavus III. to discover this great man and create him his Chancellor of the Exchequer) through whose hands millions annually flowed, and whose credit was so great that he could draw bills to almost any amount on Hamburg and Amsterdam on his personal security, died a poor man.

After three months of incessant labour, the financial commission was ready with its report, which deprecated any attempt to realise the notes of the Bank of Sweden for many years to come as mischievous. Gustavus was ill-pleased with this report, and when it was laid before the Senate, he asked the president, Falkengren, whether it represented the *unanimous* opinion of the commission. Falkengren replied that only the junior member of the commission, Councillor Liljencrantz, had refused to sign it. The King immediately summoned Liljencrantz before the Senate, and asked him why he had withheld his signature. He replied that he had done so because he was persuaded that the realisation of the enormous note currency, although a difficult, was by no means an impossible operation, and

¹ See Liljencrantz, *Anteckningar*.

at the request of the Senate he drew up a memorandum for their consideration. A warm debate ensued. The King and Chancellor Scheffer were in favour of Liljencrantz's project, but Fersen and Höpken could only see in it an ingenious attempt to pillage the Bank of Sweden, and it was ultimately rejected by the Senate as impracticable.

Immediately after the council rose, the King sent for Liljencrantz, begged him not to be discouraged by opposition, and ordered him to draw up at once a comprehensive financial scheme in a simple popular form, so that he (Gustavus), despite his want of technical knowledge, might be able to grasp all the arguments *pro* and *contra*. After two months' hard work Liljencrantz was ready with his scheme, and waited upon the King four days a week to explain it to him point by point. Liljencrantz himself has told us¹ that he was amazed at the facility with which Gustavus comprehended the project in all its bearings, although the subject of finance was altogether foreign to him. The interest he took in it was extraordinary. Even his darling pastime, acting, was neglected for a time. Often, attired as Meleager or Cinna, he would look in upon Liljencrantz for half an hour or so, and the half hour would expand into half a day, to the equal astonishment of the King and his financier. The upshot of it was that the King thoroughly convinced himself of the practicability of Liljencrantz's scheme, and resolved at any rate to give it a fair chance. So when the Senate a second time refused to consent to it, the King boldly took the matter into his own hands; created a new department of finance, of which he made Liljencrantz the first president, and ordered him to carry his scheme into execution. Henceforward Liljencrantz was to report progress to the King and Chancellor Scheffer alone.

¹ Liljencrantz, *Anteckningar*, p. 11.

The Swedish currency at this time consisted of (1) the riksdaler specie, which was the unit of account, and worth about 4s. 6d.; (2) the silver daler, worth 1s. 6½d.; the copper daler, worth 6½d.; and the copper mark, worth about 1½d.: thus the riksdaler was nominally worth 3 silver dalers, or 9 copper dalers, or 36 marks. The circulating medium, however, consisted almost entirely of copper daler notes¹ of various amounts, but the rate of exchange between these notes and the riksdaler was calculated, not by the copper daler, but by the mark. Thus, if a riksdaler exchanged for 36 marks in notes (its nominal value), the rate of exchange was said to be at par; but if 40, 50, 72, or any larger amount of marks in paper were demanded for a riksdaler, the rate of exchange was said to have risen to 40, 50, 72, accordingly. If, for instance, the rate of exchange was 72, the current notes would be worth only half of their nominal value. These notes were inconvertible, and towards the end of the Hat rule had been issued in such enormous quantities that the rate of exchange had risen to 108; in other words, the whole note circulation had sunk to one-third of its nominal value. When Liljencrantz took the financial burden of Sweden on his shoulders it still stood as high as 82—that is to say, a shilling was worth little more than fourpence. The question now was, how best to realise the constantly fluctuating note currency? Was the rate of exchange to be gradually forced down to 36 or par; or should 82, the present rate of exchange, be taken as the basis of value; or, lastly, should an unalterable medium rate

¹ Ever since the days of Gustavus II. (except during the reign of Charles XI., who had substituted silver) copper had been the standard of value in the Swedish currency. This was due chiefly to the high price of Swedish copper, but also to the poverty of the Swedish people. Another ordinary computation was by so-called tuns of gold, 1 tun of gold = 100,000 silver dalers, or about £7777, 15s.

be adopted? Liljencrantz decided in favour of the third course, and fixed the rate of exchange at 72, as being least liable to cause confusion, and as being most convenient to the public. Liljencrantz next proceeded to examine the resources of the Bank in silver, for that silver must henceforth supersede copper as the standard currency of Sweden was to his mind indispensable. He found that the silver reserve of the Bank was so slender, that even with the most delicate manipulation it could not realise a fourth of the Bank's enormous outstanding note circulation for at least twenty years. A foreign loan, on the other hand, would only add to the liabilities of the State. But the Bank also possessed a hoard of about 19,000 ships' pounds of copper-plates, worth about £100,200, and bills of exchange to the amount of 1,259,378 riksdalers (about £283,360). In short, the total resources of the Bank amounted to nearly 3,000,000 riksdalers specie or £675,000. With this fund in hand, Liljencrantz proposed to begin the realisation at once. All the circulating inconvertible copper daler notes were to be exchanged at 72, one-half their nominal, but considerably more than their actual value, for fresh bank-notes payable on presentation. At first circumstances favoured him. As he had anticipated, a good harvest and rumours of the impending realisation gradually brought down the rate of exchange to 76. Then the Bank directors resolved to fix the rate at 74, but as this would have interfered with the Government plan, the King summoned the managing director and ordered him to let the rate of exchange fall to 72, and if possible keep it there. He was at the same time informed that no resolution of the Bank affecting the rate of exchange must be taken without the royal consent. The Bank directors, however, were nervous and fidgety. They declared the whole experiment to be most risky, and saw

nothing but bankruptcy before them. They also questioned the right of the Crown to interfere with the affairs of the Bank at all, and the King's interference was undoubtedly an unconstitutional act, which only the most brilliant success could possibly justify. The jealous Senate, too, watched every step of the upstart Finance Minister with suspicion and alarm, scattering doubts and predicting failure. Still the King and Liljencrantz persisted. The latter offered the Bank the most tempting terms. The Crown was to take over 1,800,000 riksdalers (£405,000) of the Bank's debt, to borrow 1,200,000 riksdalers (£270,000) more, to fill the Bank's coffers, and pay it 75,000 riksdalers (£16,875) annually for four years out of the revenues of the crown-lands. Still the Bank hesitated, and finally it made counter-demands which amounted to a rejection of the royal offer. On July 5, 1775, the counter-claims of the Bank were discussed at a Cabinet Council—were discussed and rejected; and then the King determined to proceed with the realisation, despite the protests of the Bank directors, but to postpone it, for their greater convenience, to the beginning of 1777. The directors, perceiving that further resistance was useless, submitted at last with a bad grace, and began to collect silver and lower the price of copper by way of preparation. Liljencrantz assisted them by carrying through his first foreign loan¹ on more advantageous terms than had ever been conceded to a Swedish Minister of Finance before. The sum of 1,200,000 riksdalers (£270,000) was obtained through Hornica & Co. of Amsterdam at four per cent., on the royal security alone, with the greatest ease. This signal triumph of Liljencrantz utterly discomfited the Senate. Counts Höpken and Fersen, who had ridiculed the

¹ In this, however, he was greatly helped by the diplomatic tact and influence of Chancellor Ulric Scheffer. See C. T. Odhner: *Minne af . . . grefve Ulrik Scheffer*.

idea of any European State lending to such a poor country as Sweden, could only say that the operation was one of those "inexplicable phenomena which baffle all calculation." A second foreign loan for a similar amount, and at the same rate of interest, was also successfully negotiated through Hasselgren & Co. of Amsterdam to cover the deficit for 1776, and Liljencrantz in December of that year paid into the Bank the first stipulated payment of 700,000 riksdalers (£157,500) to facilitate the realisation. Even now, however, the Bank directors made a last stand against the detested measure. They presented a solemn remonstrance to the King, dwelling pathetically on the inadequacy of their reserve, and the extreme danger of the experiment.¹ But the King took all the responsibility on his own shoulders, and the realisation proceeded accordingly. The directors awaited the 1st of January 1777 with the greatest anxiety, but everything went off happily. It was only to be expected that, at first, the public would make the most of the novel and delightful privilege of cashing its notes. But there was nothing like a run upon the Bank, and when the excitement had somewhat subsided, Liljencrantz's suppositions proved correct: people preferred the new notes to silver. Nothing occurred which could in any way shake the confidence of the public in the Bank. In the course of 1777, however, the prospect somewhat darkened, chiefly owing to the failure of the Government Distillery Scheme (of which more anon); the Exchequer was drained nearly dry, and the King was forced to borrow largely from the Bank. The state of the finances was anxiously discussed at five Cabinet Councils, and Liljencrantz had again to come to the rescue.

¹ The Bank directors cannot be fairly blamed for their long and painful hesitation. To use their own expression two years later, when the Realisation Scheme had succeeded beyond dispute: "We lacked the audacity necessary for so great a work, because we were animated by too sensitive a regard for the credit of the Bank."

On the eve of the session of the Riksdag it was absolutely necessary to adjust the national balance-sheet, and the Finance Minister addressed himself to the task with his usual audacious ability. A fresh foreign loan of 800,000 riksdalers (£180,000) was obtained to cover the deficit for the year, while the payment in advance of part of the French subsidies enabled the Government to discharge its obligations to the Bank, the operations of the Minister being much facilitated by the gains the Government had already made from the new coinage, and by the middle of 1778 Liljencrantz was able to lay before Parliament a national balance-sheet which has been not unjustly described as "an artistic masterpiece in the higher finance."¹

The regulation of the finances had gone hand in hand with the realisation of the currency. Gustavus had intrusted it to a special commission of experts. The deficit for 1773 had risen to 66½ tons of gold (£511,280), more than half of which was in consequence of the revolution. The Budget for 1774, on the other hand, would, thanks to the French subsidies, have been pretty evenly balanced but for several extraordinary but indispensable items of expenditure, amounting altogether to £153,564, while the national debt amounted to £2,156,852, £2,039,638 of which was due from the State to the Bank. Every possible expedient was adopted to balance revenue and expenditure, but Liljencrantz's principal plan was an ambitious attempt to make the distillation of spirits, which had been free to every Swede for the last three hundred years, a *regale* or royal monopoly, by which he hoped to enormously increase the revenue of the Crown, relieve the taxpayer, economise grain by a more scientific process of distillation, and enable the Government to control the consumption of liquor. His original plan was to establish national dis-

¹ Odhner, *Sveriges Politiska Historia*.

tilleries, which were to be farmed out for terms of ten years to contractors who were to pay the Government so much on every ton of grain distilled into spirit, the extent of the distillation to be regulated by the harvest. It was calculated that, at the very lowest computation, the Crown would gain by this scheme £40,000 a year more than it got from the oppressive spirit-tax, which was to be abolished. The question was thoroughly sifted at four Cabinet Councils in October 1774, and finally the private distillation of spirits was forbidden by royal decree. The new system of national distilleries (considerably modified, however, by the suggestions of Baron Georg Gustaf Wrangel, popularly known as "Brandy Wrangel," who had made the matter his specialty) was introduced at the beginning of 1776, but, to the grievous disappointment of the Government, fell perfectly flat, chiefly owing to the novelty of the project, and the fear of speculators that illicit distilling and smuggling would make the profits, if any, quite inconsiderable. After waiting patiently for a twelvemonth, the King substantially adopted a fresh scheme of Wrangel's to the effect that, as the public declined to farm the brandy, the Crown should erect and work the distilleries on its own account. This was accordingly done. In the course of 1776-77, fifty-two royal distilleries were erected at considerable expense, and many of the most famous and ancient of the Swedish castles and mansions were converted into temporary granaries and distilleries. But it now became plain that, with all the will in the world, the Government could not make its distilleries pay. Illicit distilling and smuggling, despite the most ruthless repression, increased enormously, and ate away all the profits; and, what was still worse, the new Government found itself growing unpopular. It was only natural that an economic revolution, which ran so violently counter to long-established usage,

which so rudely meddled with the liberty of the subject, and exposed the peasants to most odious and ruinous inquisitions, should from the very first provoke widespread discontent and hostility. The hard-headed Swedish peasant could not be made to understand why it had suddenly become illegal for him to do what his forefathers had been free to do for three centuries—distil his own spirits—and he began to murmur loudly. In many places there were serious riots, which could only be put down by force. At last even the King began to regret that he had ever put his hand to the unlucky business. It was certainly the first serious blunder of his Government, and the predisposing cause of that sudden and general unpopularity which, a few years later, threatened to engulf him.

Next to the finances, it was the judicature which most needed reformation, and here the King again took the initiative, though his labours were lightened, and his orders frequently anticipated, by the zealous servant whom he had the sagacity to discover and employ as his Vicar-General in civil and ecclesiastical matters. This was Joachim Vilhelm Liliestraale, one of the few zealous, upright, and indefatigable ex-Caps who were not above doing the work of the new Government. Liliestraale was instructed to make a thorough inquisition into the condition of the magistracy and the general administration of justice, and his investigations brought to light a perfectly scandalous state of things. He found that a very large percentage of the Lord-Lieutenants and their deputies were practically absentees; that charitable funds had been appropriated wholesale by their administrators; that the communal and parochial accounts were in chaotic confusion; that many districts had been untaxed while other districts had been taxed ten times over; that the Crown forests had been systematically wasted; that

scores of manses and parsonages were in ruins; that the grossest corruption and the most grinding tyranny went hand in hand. In one diocese there had been no convocation of the clergy, no episcopal visitation, for twelve years. For eighty years the See of Linköping had not drawn the slightest benefit from its very considerable revenues. At Skinning the chief magistrate was in the habit of secluding himself in his country villa, seven miles from town, for twelve months at a time. The maladministration of justice was found to be universal; but the worst complaints were brought against one of the two Supreme Courts of Judicature—the *Göta Hofrätt*. Indeed, the case was such a very serious one that the King resolved to take it in hand personally. He began by appointing a committee of investigation, which was to examine and report upon the records of the court, and this commission, after fully satisfying itself of the gross and persistent iniquity of the *Göta Hofrätt*, presented thirty-five articles of impeachment against it to the King, who forthwith impeached the whole tribunal before the full Senate, over which he himself presided. The trial began on November 2, 1774, and was conducted throughout with open doors. The King opened the proceedings with a speech of great vigour and eloquence, in the course of which he uttered these memorable words: "A judge myself, and sharing with you all the sacred obligations imposed by that august title, it is not for me in any way to anticipate the issue of this momentous trial; but it is my heartfelt wish that, so long as I am on the throne, this process may be the last, as it is the first of its kind." After a six weeks' trial, three of the accused judges were acquitted, but the remaining nine found guilty. Five of them were disbenched, the president was suspended for twelve months, the remaining three were heavily fined. The worst of the offending Lord-

Lieutenants were also brought to justice, and were either discharged or suspended.

- 5 Not less sweeping and drastic than his civil reforms were the military reforms of Gustavus III. A monarch so jealous as he was of the honour of Sweden, and so proud of her past renown, could not but regard it as his first duty to make her as strong as possible, and accordingly we find that few Swedish monarchs devoted so much attention to the national defences as he. And certainly the state of the national defences had never been so deplorable as when Gustavus III. ascended the throne. What Charles XI. had organised with so much care and trouble, the *Frihetstid* had done its best to dissipate and destroy. Of all the numerous reforms of that most laborious of monarchs, none was so admirable and so profitable as the *Indelningsverket*, which even now, after the lapse of two centuries, is still the backbone of Sweden's national defences. The *Indelningsverket*¹ was a sort of compromise between a standing army and a national militia, which aimed at combining the soldier with the citizen. By this system the peasant proprietors and small landowners of Sweden purchased immunity from conscription by finding substitutes, who, in return for their military services, received plots of land, which they cultivated when not actually under arms, thus forming a self-supporting military colony. The cost of this indelning-army during its maintenance in the field was defrayed by a light tax upon the *rote* and *rusthaalare*,² called *passevolans*. The advantages of the Indelning System are obvious. The indelning-soldier was always available for the national defence without being cut off from the rest of the population,

¹ From *indelna*, to arrange methodically, and *verk*, a system.

² Those who maintained infantry were called *rothaalhare*, those who maintained cavalry *rusthaalare*, from *haala* to hold, maintain, *rote*, a rank or file, *rust*, a caparison or outfitting.

like the ordinary soldier. It was to the advantage of the State to possess an extra standing army at half the usual cost. It was to the advantage of the people to escape conscription. Under Charles XI. (its developer) and his son Charles XII. the system did wonders; but during the *Frihetstid*, the paralysing touch of license and corruption had shrivelled the sinews and warped the vital force of the Indelning System, and the very institution which was meant to be a nursery of warriors had lapsed into a benefit society for soldiers who had never smelt powder. The military spirit which had been predominant in Sweden under Charles XII. had been succeeded by the economic spirit. The standard of military education was lower than it had ever been. The officers spent three-quarters of their time on furlough; the men were very often not manœuvred from one year's end to another. The superior officers had no hold upon their subalterns, who were their accusers and their judges in the Riksdag. Seniority was the sole title to promotion, and the various attempts to obviate its mischievous consequences had only produced the monstrous *accord* or compensation system. Retiring officers were permitted to receive from their successors a certain bounty, or *accord*, as it was called—in other words, the subaltern who was rich enough could always buy off his superior officer. The whole arrangement was radically and transparently unmilitary, as a not uncommon case will show. An officer who has perhaps vegetated through half a century of inglorious peace retires at last upon the *accord* paid to him by his successor. That successor is killed shortly afterwards on active service. Had he survived, he too, in course of time, would have comfortably retired on *his accord*; but death, by cutting him off on the battlefield, deprives him of his perquisite and he leaves behind him a destitute family. Thus the officer dying in defence of his

country fared much worse than the officer who avoided the foe, and the obvious conclusion was: keep out of harm's way on the battlefield, and you will live to extort a fat accord from your junior officer whenever you feel disposed to retire from the service!

The first step towards a reform of these crying abuses was taken when Count Posse, in April 1773, memorialised the King "to revive the ancient spirit of the Indelning System." The King substantially adopted Posse's proposals, and the Accord System was abolished by royal decree of March 21, 1774, and a Commission of National Defence, from which all the new measures of army reform were to originate, was appointed. The guiding spirit of this commission was the versatile and energetic Count Carl Sparre, a leading member of a family which for five centuries had been accounted one of the most illustrious in Scandinavia. Carl was not the least distinguished of his distinguished race. He seems to have been one of those universal geniuses who can turn their hands to anything, and whose handiwork always turns out well. He was a dashing officer, a shrewd lawyer, a wily diplomatist, an adroit politician, a winning courtier, but above all, an enthusiastic and indefatigable organiser and administrator. As Lord-Lieutenant of the province of Gefle, he worked wonders, and his influence over the stubborn Swedish peasantry was so great that it was popularly put down to magic. Such a man could not long escape the notice of Gustavus, and one of the first acts of the young monarch was to summon Sparre from his remote province to be Governor-General of Stockholm,¹ and ultimately a Senator

¹ The ten years of Sparre's administration was the golden age of the Swedish capital. As Tegner says, she leaped at one bound from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. The philanthropist, Howard, who visited Stockholm during Sparre's administration, found the prisons there superior to the prisons in any other capital.

and War Minister, with Toll for his Adjutant-General. We shall see presently how the latter grew over the head of his chief, and how Sparre, with rare generosity, was the first to recognise the superior talent of his subaltern.

6 Even more indispensable to the security of Sweden than a strong army was a strong fleet.¹ The reconstruction of the Swedish navy, however, was a far more difficult task than the reconstruction of the Swedish army. It was the Hat party which attempted to accomplish, in the days of Sweden's decadence, what the great Caroline statesmen had hardly effected in the days of her prosperity—to give her a good navy; and fortune favoured their patriotic endeavour by giving them a man of genius to realise it in the person of Augustus Ehrensvärd, who was the first to enable Sweden to defend her own coasts with her own vessels. Recognising that Finland was Sweden's weak point, the fortifying of the Grand Duchy against a Russian attack became his main object, and he hit upon the idea of building a galley flotilla to ply among the shallow rock-studded waters of the Gulf of Finland. This was the origin of the *Skärargaards flotta*,² or coast-flotilla, which, in case of a war with Russia, was to cover and co-operate with an invading army, while the *grand fleet*³ dealt with the enemy on the open sea. This galley-flotilla was to find a refuge, in case of defeat, in the impregnable harbour of a new naval fortress, the place selected for which was the cliff outside Helsingfors, and there, beneath the eyes of the great engineer, rose the gigantic bastions of Sveaborg, the Gibraltar of the North. Ehrensvärd lived just long enough to see both his herculean labours completed. The very day after the revolution he was sent to Finland

¹ France expressly stipulated that three-quarters of her annual subsidies should be given to the fleet.

² From *skärgaard* or *skär*, the rocky skerries along the sea-coast, and *flotta*, a fleet.

³ Called in Swedish the *orlogsflotta*, or man-of-war fleet.

as commander-in-chief, in anticipation of a Russian attack. But the old man, now fast breaking, pathetically lamented that this opportunity of serving his beloved country had come twenty years too late, and he was already on his death-bed when the marshal's baton, sent to him by Gustavus, was placed in his hands. He was buried at the expense of the State in the chapel of his own fortress, and the plain granite pyramid over his tomb bears the simple inscription: "Here rests Ehrensvärd in the midst of his labours and his fleet."

The new Government energetically followed in the footsteps of Ehrensvärd by reforming the whole naval administration, which during the latter years of the *Frihetstid* had been utterly neglected. The Board of Admiralty was transferred from Carlsrona to Stockholm for better supervision. The building of ships of war, under the direction of Frederick Henrik Chapman,¹ proceeded with unprecedented rapidity, and the ubiquitous Sparre, who now became Minister of Marine as well as Minister of War, informed everything with his own restless vigour. The superb docks at Carlsrona, certainly the most elaborate and perfect of their day, were now completed, and Thunberg, the architect, was ennobled for a work comparable even to the works of Ehrensvärd. Nor was the galley-flotilla overlooked. Sparre handed this department over to Henrik af Trolle, who speedily elaborated a plan for placing the whole of the *Skärگاards flotta* on a war footing, a plan warmly approved of by the King, and carried out with masterly thoroughness.

It was about this time that Gustavus was compelled to

¹ Chapman was the son of an English naval officer who had settled in Sweden. He was a naval architect in the service of the Government from 1762 to 1772, but it was Gustavus who gave him free scope for his ability, and made him a Vice-Admiral.

part with two men whose talents and services seemed to mark them out as the pillars of his throne. These two men were the Sprengtportens, and it is only due to the King to say that it was through no fault of his that the elder of the brothers had ceased to be his friend, and the younger was fast becoming his foe. Great as had been the services of the Sprengtportens, their rewards had been still greater. But they were not satisfied, and regarded every mark of favour not bestowed upon themselves as a personal insult. A most trumpery affair brought about a downright rupture between the King and the elder Sprengtporten. Sprengtporten had insulted the Guards (March 1774) by giving precedence over them at a court-martial to some officers of his own dragoons. The Guards complained to the King, who, after consulting with the Senate, ventured, with almost unkingly humbleness, to mildly remonstrate with the irate Sprengtporten by letter. The next day Sprengtporten almost rushed into the royal presence, and, trembling with rage and emotion, tendered his resignation as colonel of the Guards. His language was insolent and his demeanour most violent. The King treated him with all imaginable tenderness, and said that if he (Sprengtporten) *must* go, he should go at least as a senator, and even offered to place him over all the fortresses of the kingdom with the title of Quartermaster-General. So far from being mollified, however, Sprengtporten flounced out of the room, and immediately afterwards wrote the King such a studiously offensive letter that Gustavus was minded at first to hand it over to the law-officers of the Crown, and allow them to indict the offender for high misdemeanour. But the claims of friendship prevailed, and the only revenge Gustavus took was to return Sprengtporten his letter with a private note gently inviting him to reconsider his resignation and moderate his language in future. All would not do, however. Sprengtporten insisted upon retiring from

public life altogether. He was haunted by the fixed idea that the *jeunesse dorée* of the Court was in league with his old enemies, the ancient party chiefs, to traduce and supplant him, and not all the kindness of the King could open his eyes. He received a pension of £2400 on his retirement, and was allowed the extraordinary privilege of a guard of honour as long as he lived. To the end of his career, however (he died in 1786), he continued to harass and annoy his long-suffering benefactor with fresh impertinences.¹

At first it seemed as if the younger Sprengtporten would take his brother's place, and indeed he did succeed to many of his dignities, became the Colonel of the Savolax Dragoons in Finland, and introduced many useful reforms into the military organisation of the Grand Duchy. Disappointed, however, in his hope of becoming commander-in-chief of the Finnish forces, he suddenly discovered a burning desire for foreign travel, and begged the King to accept his resignation. Fresh promotion silenced his discontent for a time; but when, in the beginning of 1778, some of his suggestions were not instantly adopted, Sprengtporten again took up the idea of a foreign tour, and obtained leave of absence and his travelling expenses in advance. While he was still completing his arrangements, the news of the approaching Riksdag made Sprengtporten change his mind once more and wish to remain; but the King, who knew very well that such an unruly spirit would only be a disturbing element in Parliament, hastened his departure by an autograph letter wishing him a happy journey and enclosing a draft for 1000 riksdalers. Sprengtporten was wild with rage, but he had

¹ This is a brief extract from one of his more moderate letters: "People say that your Majesty's character contains so much duplicity that your Majesty can never reckon upon a faithful friend or honest servant. Your Majesty's weakness for minions, and vulgar partiality for favourites, has fostered a feeling for you which, if I may venture to so express myself, is very much akin to contempt," &c., &c. *Gustav. Pap.*

now no excuse for remaining, for the King had taken him at his word. But from henceforth he became Gustavus's most implacable enemy, and the sequel will show that he did not shrink from gratifying this enmity at the expense of his country.

CHAPTER XI.

THE OBSEQUIIOUS RIKSDAG OF 1778.

Summoning of a Riksdag—Loyalty of the Deputies—The King and Fersen—Reform of the House of Nobles in an anti-democratic sense—Opening of the Riksdag—The speech from the throne—Fersen's unlucky rule of procedure—Indignation of Gustavus—Stormy interview with Fersen—The finances—Triumph of Liljen-
crantz—Hummelhelm's memorial—Dissolution of the Riksdag—Insincerity of its loyal demonstrations—Prosecution of Hallden—Suspension of the freedom of the press—Failure of the Governmental Distillation System—Degradation of the Senate.

GUSTAVUS could now look forward to the meeting of a Riksdag with an easy conscience. He had stretched his reforming hand in every direction; he had rooted out many ancient abuses and sown the seeds of many future benefits. The finances had been regulated. The national debt was diminishing. A corrupt judicature had been sifted and purified. Fresh life had been infused into every branch of the public service. The army was better armed and better officered than it had been since the days of Charles XII. The fleet was already the fleet of a great Power. And all this had been done in the space of six short years. Finally, Gustavus had summoned to his side a chosen band of able and energetic Ministers to sustain and support him. The time too had now arrived when Gustavus had promised to call the Estates together again, and, as the political horizon abroad seemed, for the moment, absolutely cloudless, the King determined to hold a Riksdag at once, and a proclamation summoned the Estates to assemble at Stock-

holm on September 30, 1778. The anticipated birth of an heir to the throne was the ostensible reason of their convocation. Just before the elections began Gustavus skilfully removed out of his way Burgomaster Sebald of Stockholm, who during the last Riksdag had been his most determined opponent. The Russian and Danish Ministers had counted upon Sebald giving the King considerable trouble at this Riksdag also, but Gustavus adroitly snatched away their champion by making him a peer, thus converting the noisy demagogue into a silent and submissive member of the Upper House. This, however, was the only electioneering manœuvre the King permitted himself. But indeed his popularity was still so great that he had no need of putting pressure on the constituencies, and when all the Deputies assembled at Stockholm, the professed or notorious enemies of the King could be counted on the fingers of one hand. The bâton of the Land Marshal was conferred¹ by Gustavus upon Baron Saltza, one of the lesser heroes of the revolution, but not till after the haughty Fersen had declined that dignity, and it became quite clear that the audacious Toll would be unacceptable to the nobility. The Primate of Sweden was now the *talman* or Speaker of the Estate of the Clergy *ex officio*, and the King appointed Councillor Eckerman *talman* of the Burgesses, and Andreas Mathison of Malmö *talman* of the Peasants. All these men were more remarkable for their loyalty than their ability. The Opposition insinuated that it was part of the King's plan to surround himself with men of sufficient talent to serve his designs, and sufficient stupidity not to see through them.

But though serious resistance to the royal will was

¹ The ambiguous wording of some of the clauses of his own Constitution enabled Gustavus to get the appointment of the presidents of the four Estates into his own hands, which gave him a considerable, though by no means an overwhelming, influence at every Riksdag.

scarcely conceivable, the King felt by no means so sure of the *Riddarhus*, or House of Nobles, as he did of the lower Estates. There from the first lay, dispersed and concealed, the fractions of a heterogeneous opposition which needed only the magnetic influence of a capable leader to make them fly together, and if the venerable Axel von Fersen had only felt disposed to organise a regular parliamentary opposition there, he would readily have found followers. His life-long experience of popular assemblies; his eloquence, second only to the King's; his enormous influence with the aristocracy, and his vast wealth, still made him a power in the State; and Rückman, the Russian *chargé d'affaires*, went so far as to privately inform him that he might name his own terms, if only he would play the part intended for him by the Empress. But Fersen, to his honour, not only declined the offer with cold contempt,¹ but hastened to inform the King that he intended to support the Government so long as the Government kept well within the limits of the Constitution, and promised to assist him in reviving the *Riddarhus ordnung*, or House of Nobles Regulation of Gustavus Adolphus, as a means of strengthening the authority of the Crown. This ordinance struck at the very root of the present democratic constitution of the House of Nobles by subdividing it anew into its three original classes of (1) counts and barons; (2) senatorial families; and (3) country gentlemen, each class voting separately, and every measure being decided by a majority of classes, instead of, as heretofore, by a majority of individuals, thus taking the control of that assembly out of the hands of the mob of needy gentlemen who had held it ever since 1719. As, however, it was not to be expected that the majority of the gentry would consent to submit to what

¹ Professor Odhner, however (*Sveriges Politiska Historia*) does not take so favourable a view of Fersen's relations with the Russian *chargé d'affaires*.

was tantamount to political extinction without a struggle, Gustavus resolved to overawe all opposition by personally presiding in the *Riddarhus* on this occasion in his capacity of first nobleman in the land. Accordingly he quitted the throne and occupied the chair of the Land Marshal, with the silver baton on the table in front of him. This manœuvre had the desired effect, and the majority consented to efface itself with singular unanimity.

On October 19, 1778, the session of the first Gustavian Parliament was opened with unusual pomp and splendour. Stockholm had never been so full of people, and the Lord Chamberlain was seriously embarrassed by the extraordinary number of ladies who desired to be presented. The speech from the throne was most eloquent as usual, and its tone was one of honest satisfaction and patriotic joy. Gustavus laid before the Estates a clear and succinct account of the numerous reforms which had been carried out since the last Riksdag. If, however, it had been impossible to find a remedy for every evil within so short a time, they were to recollect that "kings are but men, and that time alone can heal the wounds which time has inflicted." The peroration exhorted to mutual confidence and concord. This session should serve to establish "an everlasting bond of union between king and people."

After the royal speech, the Lord High Steward read aloud the royal "propositions," as the Bills presented to Parliament for acceptance or rejection were called, the new Constitution conferring the initiative in legislation upon the monarch. On the following day the Estates met in congress, the King presiding, when Gustavus, speaking from memory, gave them an account of his dealings with foreign Powers during the last six years. The Lord High Steward then read an elaborate review of the whole of the internal administration, which was, however, as remarkable for its reticences as its

confidences, the new Distillation System, which was the burning question of the day, being not so much as alluded to. Hitherto things had gone smoothly enough, and everything seemed to forebode a quiet humdrum Riksdag, when a little misunderstanding arose between the King and Fersen which very nearly led to a violent explosion.

The Bank *Deputation*¹ had been formed early in the session, chiefly from among the King's friends and a few independent specialists such as Fersen and Friezsky. At the first meeting of the committee, Deputy Billing moved that they should first of all draw up an *Instruction*, or rule of procedure for their guidance. The motion was adopted, and Fersen, at the request of the committee, framed accordingly a rule of procedure, the principal article of which was to the effect that every member of the committee, despite his oath of secrecy, should be free to communicate to the Riksdag any resolution of the committee which he might consider prejudicial to the Bank. Fersen seems to have acted with perfect good faith in the matter. He gave notice beforehand to the Marshal of the Diet of what he was about to do, and the easy-going Saltza not only allowed the motion to be carried, but represented it to the King as a mere matter of routine, so that Gustavus did not even take the trouble to read the wording of it. All the more amazed then and scandalised was he when Liljencrantz came to the palace the same evening in a great state of trepidation, and represented Fersen's rule of procedure as an attempt to give publicity to the proceedings of the Bank of Sweden, whose credit demanded the utmost secrecy. The King, who could scarce believe his ears, at once sent for the Marshal of the Diet and the Talman of the Burgesses, and warmly reprimanded them for their carelessness in allowing such a motion

¹ That is to say, the secret parliamentary committee which examined and reported upon the affairs of the Bank of Sweden.

to pass. "If you go on in this way," cried he, "you may awake one fine morning and find yourselves Catholics in your own despite." Against Fersen he was very wroth, as he fancied he saw in the Count's conduct a defiance of his own will, especially after Chancellor Scheffer gave it as his opinion that Count Fersen really meant to embarrass the financial operations of the Government.¹ On hearing this, Gustavus was at first inclined to arrest the Count on a charge of high treason, but more moderate counsels prevailed, and he resolved to give the offender an opportunity of explaining his conduct. So Fersen was sent for, and on arriving at the palace at once anticipated a storm, for the rendezvous was not in the private cabinet, where *friendly* audiences were always granted, but in the grand reception room, whither he was escorted with the most imposing ceremony. Fersen found the King standing in the centre of the room with his sword by his side and a lace-bedizened hat in his hand. On perceiving Fersen, Gustavus stepped fiercely up to him. "My Lord Count," said he, "I am astonished at your audacity in attempting to incite your fellow-subjects against your common King." He then loaded Fersen with invectives, accused him of sedition and disloyalty, and even warned him that persistence in such conduct would imperil his head.² Fersen tells us that he waited quietly till the King had quite spent his wrath, and then gave him a straightforward common-sense account of the whole matter. The King listened in silence, gradually recovered his equanimity, and admitted, before

¹ It must be remembered, however, that Fersen and Scheffer were foes of long standing.

² We must bear in mind that the only contemporary account of this interview is Fersen's own. It is certainly quite impossible to believe that Gustavus could have listened, in his excitement, to half the things that Fersen represents himself to have said. On the other hand, the King also, in his brief account of this Riksdag, admits that he went too far on this occasion. Fersen, *Historiska Skrifter*, Bd. iv. pp. 92 *et seq.* Geijer, *Gustav. Pap.*

they parted, that he had been unjust and over-hasty in his suspicions. Fersen, mollified by the King's assurances, then promised his assistance in getting the obnoxious motion rescinded, and rescinded it was accordingly with very little difficulty.

For the remainder of the session the Riksdag worked chiefly on its financial committee, which, on January 4, 1779, presented to the King its written reply to his financial propositions or Bills. The committee agreed that the balance of the Bank's claims against the State, amounting to 4,750,806 riksdalers (£1,068,031), should be written off in return for certain additional privileges to be conceded by the Crown to the Bank, and that thus the whole of the Crown's debt to the Bank, contracted during the last fifty years, should be considered discharged. At the same time they announced that a vote of fifty tuns of gold (£388,887) had been granted by the State for completing the national defences. The Marshal of the Diet, in the name of the committee, then proceeded to thank the King for having restored the national credit and re-established the equilibrium of the finances; but Gustavus, interrupting him for a moment, beckoned to Liljencrantz, who was standing modestly among the other members of the committee, to come forward and stand on his left hand, that he "who had done the work might receive the thanks." Liljencrantz protested that the honour was too great, but Gustavus would take no denial, and, standing side by side, the monarch and the minister received at the same time the thanks of the Estates.

Towards the end of the session a question arose which showed that the Estates, for all their loyalty and enthusiasm, half suspected the King of intending to encroach upon their legislative privileges. On January 17, Deputy Hummelhjelm read a memorial in the Upper House, in which he desired to be informed how the *Riksdags ordnung* of 1617 and the Con-

stitution of 1772 were to be reconciled, inasmuch as, according to the latter, the Estates of the realm were to legislate together with the King, whereas, according to the former, the King, in case of a difference between the Estates, had the right to act as he thought best, a right which Hummelhjelms opined placed the legislative power entirely in the King's hands. He then moved that a petition be presented to his Majesty, begging him to graciously interpret for them the *Riksdags ordnung* of 1617.

Hummelhjelms memorial created almost as great a sensation as Fersen's *Bankinstruktion*. Many were even inclined to regard it as another secret manœuvre of the Hat leader. The King settled the matter with characteristic decision by closing the session without more ado, now that the Riksdag showed a disposition to be troublesome, and so Hummelhjelms memorial remained unanswered. The dissolution speech happily contrasted the past, when "the parliamentary session was marked by the oppression of fellow-citizens . . . and internal discord," with the present, "distinguished only by a common endeavour to promote the welfare of a beloved and common fatherland." The first Estate, however, received a mild reprimand. "Do not forget," said the King, turning to the Nobility, "that if the present happy tranquillity of the realm does not require of you the example of valour which you have so often given your fellow-citizens in the days of my forefathers, do not forget, I say, that I have still the right to demand that you stimulate and prevent your fellow-citizens by an example of devotion to me, and of confidence in my care for them." For the three lower Estates, on the other hand, the King had nothing but praise. The Clergy he thanked for "all the love and devotion" they had shown him during the session, and they were exhorted to implant similar sentiments in the bosoms of their flocks. The Burgesses were commended for their "zeal and loyalty, which,"

added the orator, "is all the dearer to me, as I regard the affection of my subjects as the one great solace for all the many burdens of my crown." But to none of the Estates did the King speak so feelingly as to the Fourth Estate. "Ye good men of the honourable Estate of Peasants," he said, "ye in whom I once again recognise, with the deepest emotion, that loyalty (may I ever deserve it!) which the Swedish peasantry has always cherished for its kings . . . take home to your brethren the expression of my gratitude, and assure them of the love I bear to that Estate which both cultivates and defends the soil!"

Thus ended a Riksdag which Geijer has called "a political spectacle with which Gustavus III. entertained the world and himself." Never had a Parliament been so obsequious or a King so gracious. "There was no room for a single No" during the whole session. Every one had come thither to approve and to applaud. For the first time for fifty years the course of Swedish politics ran smoothly and equably in its natural channel. There was scarcely a glimpse of a legitimate parliamentary opposition. Only a single party chief, the venerable Axel von Fersen, had warily raised his head, only to as warily withdraw it. Well might the King write to his friend Ambassador Creutz at Paris: "I have reached the happiest stage of my career. My people are convinced that I only desire to promote their welfare and establish their freedom on a firm basis." And nevertheless, little as he suspected it, the Riksdag of 1778 had roughly shaken the popularity which Gustavus III. hoped for and so ardently desired. Short as the session had been, it was quite long enough to open the eyes of the deputies to the fact that their political supremacy had departed. They had changed places with the King. He was now indeed their Sovereign Lord, and the jealousy with which he guarded, the vigour with

which he enforced his prerogatives, plainly showed that he meant to remain so. Even the few who were prudent and patriotic enough to acquiesce in the change by no means liked it, while the many, who were neither prudent nor patriotic, looked back with wistful eyes upon the past when the emissaries of France and Russia, with their pockets stuffed full with livres and roubles, waylaid Swedish Riksdagsmen in the very lobbies of Parliament, when every man's vote had its money value, and a judicious trimmer might make his fortune by a single well-timed division. Then, too, each estate had its own particular grievances against the King. The country gentlemen were indignant at the revival of an obsolete ordinance which wrested from them the control of the Upper House. The clergy saw in the re-establishment of religious equality¹ an assault upon the National Church. The burgesses regarded the partial introduction of free trade as a dangerous innovation, injurious to Swedish commerce, and the peasants were bitterly mortified at the refusal of the King to restore to them the right of home distillation. It was not the least ominous feature of the situation that the general dissatisfaction had been absolutely dumb. So long as the Riksdag lasted, votes of thanks and votes of credit, grateful and enthusiastic deputations, had been the order of the day. But how thoroughly insincere these loyal demonstrations were may be gathered from the significant fact that, throughout the whole session, not a single reference was made by anybody to the one subject which was uppermost in the public mind: we allude, of course, to the disastrous Distillation System of the Government, with its vexatious domiciliary visitations, its fiscal

¹ The King had encouraged the Finnish clerical deputy Chydenius to introduce a Bill for establishing absolute religious equality in Sweden. The measure passed through all four Estates and received the royal sanction. Another royal ordinance at the same time made the criminal code less summary and bloody; a third restricted mercantile monopolies.

chicaneries, and its boundless opportunities for subaltern rapacity and oppression. It was only after Parliament had risen that the national grievance found a spokesman who fearlessly rushed in where the Estates of the realm had feared to tread, in the form of the mystical Halldin, a Swedenborgian fanatic, who at this time possessed the ear of the King,¹ and occasionally went so far as to address his royal patron in much the same style in which Elijah the Tishbite addressed King Ahab. Halldin seriously regarded himself as the divinely-appointed messenger of wrath to a backsliding generation, and the reformer of all the social abuses of his age. The injurious licensing system of the Government was just what this ardent reformer could not away with, and he criticised it in the *Stockholm Post* with such freedom and acerbity that he was arrested, arraigned for high treason, and ultimately condemned to death along with the printer and publisher of the paper, though the sentence was immediately mitigated by the King to a week's imprisonment on bread and water. But the matter did not end here. A few weeks later a royal decree re-established the censorship by making printers henceforth exclusively responsible for all abuses of the press laws. This example acted as a deterrent. The Swedish press henceforward eschewed politics, and devoted itself entirely to *belles lettres*. The prophetic words of Senator Höpken, uttered six years before, had come true. The Gustavian era and a free press were found to be incompatible.

But despite penal edicts and prohibitive laws, the evils of the licensing system continued to force themselves upon the public attention. Throughout the years 1779-81 the attempts of the Government to enforce more stringently the licensing regulations had the most serious consequences.

¹ Fuller details about this extraordinary individual will be found at the end of Chapter XIII.

Disturbances broke out in all parts of the country. Only by calling out the military could the peasantry be kept under. In many districts martial law had to be proclaimed. The most ominous symptom, however, was the sudden reappearance of General Pechlin on the political scene as the peasants' friend. Only four years before, Pechlin had been held in such detestation by the country-folk that they had attempted to murder him in his own castle. Now, however, when he came before the tribunals to plead the cause of the peasantry against the Government, they hailed him as their guardian-angel. Pechlin's intervention greatly increased the difficulties of the Government. It was by his advice that the peasantry raised a common fund for mutual defence, and he succeeded not only in obtaining the reversal of many of the sentences passed against them for infringing the licensing law, but also in convicting several Government officials of tyranny and corruption. The King was watching all these complications from afar (they happened during his absence at Spa, for his health at this time caused his friends great anxiety), and was by no means displeased that the Senate, which ruled in his absence, should bear the responsibility for the harsh measures necessary to preserve order during his absence. "Let the old fellows also have a bite at the sour apple," wrote he to Wachtmeister, the new Minister of Justice. He proposed, on his return, to reverse most of the Raad's decrees, because "the greatest proof of his authority which a monarch can give is to alter what his Senate has done in his absence." The once omnipotent Senate, indeed, was fast becoming a costly superfluity. Moreover, the institution of a new order of dignitaries, the so-called *Rikets Herrar*, or Lords of the Realm, who, without holding any office of trust or emolument, were declared to be equal in rank to senators, still further lowered the latter in the public estimation. No wonder if the more

illustrious members of the discredited Senate hastened to leave it. The King, however, still kept up the fiction of consulting his Raad in domestic affairs, but he had been careful, from the first, to keep the conduct of foreign affairs entirely in his own hands. Here indeed his energies found their most congenial field of activity. Gustavus III. was a born diplomatist, and he followed the fluctuations of European politics with the keen interest of a professional speculator. To raise Sweden once more to the rank of a considerable Power was his constant ambition, and he gained his ambition, though at a most ruinous cost. Sweden, indeed, during the reign of Gustavus III. played an important part in the world, and was a factor in contemporary politics which no prudent statesman could afford to neglect.

CHAPTER XII.

EUROPEAN POLITICS FROM 1774 TO 1779.

Dependence of Sweden on Louis XV.—Accession of Louis XVI.—The Ministry of honest men—Vacillation of the foreign policy of France—Sweden and Russia—Simolin—Visit of Gustavus to St. Petersburg—He surprises Chancellor Panin *en déshabillé*—Gustavus's first impressions of Catherine II.—Catherine at forty-eight—Her impressions of Gustavus—Her reserve towards him—Splendour of his reception—Gifts and graces—Intimate correspondence of Catherine and Gustavus—Her suspicions of him—Secret intrigues of the Russian and Danish Ministers against Gustavus—Disturbed state of Europe—Russia and Turkey—Austria and Prussia—France and America—Sweden and Denmark—Russia mediates between Prussia and Austria—Gustavus's views on the American war—Complications with England—The armed neutrality of the North—Fresh treaty between France and Sweden.

EVER since the simultaneous disarmament of England and France, and the simultaneous resumption of hostilities between Russia and the Porte, the position of Sweden had ceased to be acutely critical, but still remained in the highest degree precarious. The new Power (for under the Hats and Caps Sweden had scarcely been a Power at all) only existed on sufferance. Nothing short of a successful war could make it thoroughly independent. Gustavus and his Ministers clearly recognised this fact, and all their efforts were therefore directed towards making Sweden a strong fighting Power. But the process was necessarily a slow one, and, moreover, made Sweden, for a time, subservient to an ally whose assistance was indispensable, but whose patronisation was insupportable to the King of Sweden. That ally was France.

Inestimable had been the services which the last Ministry of Louis XV. had rendered to the new Swedish Government. It had not merely protected Sweden ; it had sought to provide her with the sinews of war, so as to make her a serviceable ally. At the very time when his own Government was drifting into hopeless insolvency, the Duc d'Aiguillon negotiated a loan of 3,000,000 livres to enable Sweden to mobilise her army, and even seemed disposed to raise another 6,000,000 to assist the financial operations of Liljencrantz. In return for such services, Gustavus was obliged to support the anti-Russian intrigues of the French ambassador at Constantinople, and even submit to the dictation of Vergennes, the French ambassador at Stockholm. For a time, therefore, Sweden seemed as much the retainer of France as she had been before ; but in May 1774 an event occurred which considerably modified their relations. The interminable reign of Louis XV. came to an end at last, and his grandson, a boy of twenty, ascended the throne. The first act of the new King was to dismiss the Ministers and banish the mistresses of his predecessor ; his second act was to "barricade himself"¹ with persons of the highest character and the purest intentions. It seemed to be the peculiar ambition of the young monarch to surround himself with perfectly honest men. With the single exception of the indispensable M. de Sartines, the new Ministers were strange to the circle of Versailles. The aged Marquis de Maurepas was recalled from an exile of a quarter of a century to fill the post of Premier. The Marshal de St. Germaine, a veteran of decayed fortune, was summoned from his lonely grange among the Alsatian hills to be Minister of War. Vergennes, with no aristocratic connections, and only his abilities to recommend him, was recalled from Stockholm to preside at the Foreign Office. Turgot,

¹ Creutz to Gustavus III.

already famous for his liberality and benevolence, exchanged the subordinate post of Intendant of Limoges for the responsible but perilous Ministry of Finance, and with him was associated the noble-minded Malesherbes, who had preferred disgrace to dignity under Louis XV., and would only accept office under Louis XVI. on condition that no more *lettres de cachet* were issued. The new Ministers were hailed by their own countrymen as the heaven-sent pioneers of a new and better order of things ; but this enthusiasm was by no means shared by the statesmen and diplomatists of Europe. Gustavus III. was among the very first to recognise that the new French Government was distinctly a change for the worse. The late French Government, indeed, had been one of the basest and weakest that France had ever had, yet it could certainly boast of a purpose and a policy. Its principles were villanous, but it understood them perfectly, and stuck to them through thick and thin. Their successors were amiable, well-meaning men, who did not know their own minds. The King was an honest man in the fullest sense of the word, and his sole ambition was to do good ; but a morbid distrust of his own capacity paralysed all his good intentions. His Ministers frequently complained that they might give him opinions, but never convictions, and that it was impossible to do anything with or for a monarch who would neither decide for himself nor allow others to decide for him. No man ever laboured so much to so little purpose as Louis XVI. He worked in his cabinet twelve hours a day. He personally supervised the labours of all his Ministers, and his official correspondence was voluminous ; but vacillation and precipitancy alternately ruled all his actions.¹ Nor were his Ministers the men to aid their master in his perplexity. The Premier was a frivolous old courtier, who treated the most

¹ Compare Creutz's correspondence with Gustavus III. in *Gustav. Pap.*, and Geffroy, *Gustave III. et la Cour de France*.

trivial things as serious, and the most serious things as trivial: a nonchalance which was content to live from hand to mouth was the leading trait of his character. His sole ambition was to rid himself of his abler colleagues, Turgot, St. Germaine, and Malesherbes, as speedily as possible, and this he very soon contrived to do, the indiscretion with which they attempted to carry out their injudicious reforms having raised up all the privileged classes against them. Vergennes, the Foreign Secretary, remained in office somewhat longer, because the one man (Choiseul) who could have taken his place was displeasing to the King; but between two such stools as Louis XVI. and M. de Maurepas, he was bound to come to the ground sooner or later, and, in the meantime, the insecurity of his position was reflected in the unsteady and capricious foreign policy of France during the first few years of the new reign. Add to this, that the beautiful young Queen, Marie Antoinette, whose influence over the King, though always fluctuating, was still considerable,¹ intrigued incessantly for the return to power of Choiseul,² while the Ministers themselves, doctrinaires of divergent schools, were constantly at sixes and sevens, and we shall see at once that such a Cabinet was as little able to keep its short-lived popularity at home as to win the slightest confidence abroad. It was not to be expected that the audaciously enterprising Gustavus III. would long submit to remain in the leading-strings of a Government led by an irresolute youth, eight years his junior, and we shall see how, by degrees, Sweden withdrew herself from beneath the

¹ "If" wrote Creutz to Gustavus, "the Queen had conducted herself with prudence and dignity, she would have gained a paramount influence over the King; but she is inconsequent, flighty, and constantly compromises herself by her frivolities. In spite of all this," he adds, "she has such a charming and seductive manner with her, that she can always hit upon a way of captivating the King anew whenever she has displeased him."

² But the pious Louis XVI. could never be persuaded to employ the Minister who had banished the Jesuits.

paramount influence of France, and struck out an independent line of policy of her own. This change is especially noticeable in her dealings with Russia.

The Tsarina had been so much in the habit of regarding Sweden as a semi-subject principality, that the *coup-d'état* of 1772 had seemed to her little short of an act of overt rebellion. The misfortunes of the Turkish war, however, and the horrible devastations of Pugachev in the heart of Russia, had compelled her, for a time, to swallow her wrath; but her hostility towards Gustavus III. was only too apparent, and to conciliate the offended divinity till they were strong enough to defy her became therefore the policy of Chancellor Scheffer and his master. Such a policy was, however, frequently difficult almost to impossibility. Several times between 1773 and 1778 the two countries, despite the most dexterous steering, seemed drifting into a collision. It was no secret to Catherine that Celsing, the Swedish envoy at Constantinople, supported his French colleague's anti-Russian intrigues, and that the French Government had again and again over-persuaded the King of Sweden to postpone his contemplated visit to St. Petersburg, so she retaliated by giving the cold shoulder to his accredited Ministers, snubbing his special envoys, and selecting to represent her at Stockholm (1775) a diplomatist whom she well knew to be equally hateful to the Swedish King and the Swedish people in the person of Ivan Matyevich Simolin, a person of lowly birth and brutal manners but undoubted ability.¹ The detestation in which he was held at Stockholm is almost incredible. Society there positively refused to receive him, and the common people used to hoot him in the streets. Simolin avenged himself by tampering

¹ He was the son of a poor Lutheran clergyman at Reval. Fersen said of him that he had all the qualities necessary to read the hearts of men, and none of the qualities necessary to live with them.

with the loyalty of leading ex-Hats and ex-Caps, and bribing Ministers of State to furnish him with secret information concerning everything except the diplomatic correspondence of Sweden, which, being under the exclusive control of the King and his Chancellor, was inaccessible even to Russian gold. Thanks, however, to the efforts of the discreet and pacific Russian Chancellor, Panin, the relations between the two countries gradually took a more friendly turn. What, however, contributed more than anything else to bring Catherine and Gustavus together was a mutual distrust of Frederick of Prussia. Catherine's habitual attitude towards the philosopher of Sans-Souci was one of suspicious watchfulness, while Gustavus had come to regard the enmity of his uncle as almost preferable to his friendship. The character of Catherine, on the other hand, greatly interested the young King, and, though his efforts to make her personal acquaintance were repeatedly repulsed, he nevertheless persevered, and was finally rewarded by a special invitation in the politest terms. The Swedish Senate was informed, at the last moment, of his Majesty's contemplated journey, and had nothing to object to it; Liljencrantz provided the money for travelling expenses and presents, and on June 7, 1777, the King, accompanied by Chancellor Scheffer, Admiral Trolle, and twenty-one attendants, quitted Stockholm in splendid weather, and reached Petersburg in such high good-humour that he resolved to play a practical joke upon the Russian Chancellor, Panin. But we must let Gustavus tell his own story. "I bade Nolcken¹ take me with him [incognito to Panin's], and accordingly we went together in his carriage. On arriving, we traversed several apartments where there were a great many officers of the household, who regarded me with some astonishment. I wore my blue coat *à la Charles*

¹ The Swedish Minister at Petersburg.

XIII., and the white handkerchief round my arm, but without any mark which could betray my rank, and as I walked behind Nolcken, with a free and easy air, they could not exactly make out who I was. We proceeded in this way to the cabinet where Count Panin was dressing; he had, in fact, just put on his shirt, and was at that moment engaged in tucking it into his trousers. On perceiving Nolcken he said, 'Ah! ah! my dear Count, I am glad to see you. What news have you brought us?'. At that moment he saw me, and I stepped forward. I could read his surprise in his eyes, but his confusion was complete when Nolcken presented me as the Count of Gothland.¹ I cannot describe his embarrassment. He would have doffed his nightcap, which he still had upon his head, but he dared not let go his breeches, which he was holding up with the other. . . . 'My dear Baron,' cried he, turning to Nolcken, 'what trick is this that you have played me?' . . . Nolcken replied that there were visitors to whom one could refuse nothing; when I, interposing, said, that as the sole object of my journey was to see the Empress, I had come to him direct to solicit an audience, so as to lose no time; that though I had not seen him for twenty years, I thought I might treat him as an old acquaintance, and therefore took the liberty of visiting him without ceremony. This discourse gave him the opportunity to readjust his shirt and breeches, by which time he was able to pay me a few compliments in a fashion quite his own, his style of speaking being very diffuse and full of repetitions, yet quite free from verbosity. . . . 'And now,' said I at last, 'I must let you complete your toilet. I am going to look over your house with Baron Nolcken, and as I am something of a connoisseur of furniture, I will give you my opinion about it.' I said this to put him completely at his ease, and proceeded

¹ Gustavus's travelling name at this period.

to inspect his house, which is beautifully, nay, superbly furnished, though the furniture, as in nearly all the great houses of Petersburg, is very oddly arranged."

At five o'clock the same day Gustavus was presented to the Empress. The first interview was marked by a great show of mutual esteem and affection. The cousins embraced each other with effusive tenderness, and Catherine, giving Gustavus her arm, led him into her cabinet, where they conversed familiarly for half an hour. The siren seems to have exhausted all her witcheries upon her guest and kinsman, and the impression she succeeded in producing was one of ineffaceable admiration. And, indeed, even now, in her forty-eighth year,¹ Catherine II. had lost little of that marvellous beauty which twelve years before had surprised even the scoffing Rulhière into a momentary enthusiasm. Her brilliant complexion; her superb chestnut hair; her wonderful brown eyes, with their peculiar violet *nuances*; the exquisite symmetry of her head and neck; her beautiful arms and delicate little hands; her figure, equally graceful and majestic—all these outward charms were as charming as they had ever been. And this imperial presence was but the casket which guarded one of the most gifted of intellects. Comparing her, a few years afterwards, with two other world-renowned beauties, Marie Antoinette and Caroline of Naples, both of whom he knew intimately, Gustavus unhesitatingly awarded the palm to the already ageing Empress. In his opinion there was no other woman like her in the world.

Far less favourable was Catherine's impression of Gustavus. We can quite understand that the slight frail figure and delicate, almost effeminate, frame of the Swedish King would scarcely appeal to the taste of a masculine-minded princess,

¹ There is some doubt as to the exact date of the Tsarina's birth, but 1729 is the year most commonly adopted.

whose ideal of manly excellence was either the robustly athletic, à la *Potemkin*, or the pink and white, curled Adonis type, à la *Lanskoi*. Nor did the petty weaknesses of her kinsman escape her watchful eye, such, for instance, as his fondness for the outward "pomp and circumstance" of power; his stickling for etiquette; his passion for theatrical effect, weaknesses which she rightly regarded as belonging rather to a woman than a man, and as especially ridiculous in a prince of Gustavus's genius. For through all these superficial flaws Catherine was quick to recognise her kinsman's intellectual superiority; indeed, the consciousness that in him she had to deal with a dangerous rival was the real though secret cause of her antipathy. Vainly did Gustavus endeavour to obtain from her a recognition of the revolution of 1772; vainly did he attempt to cajole her into a formal alliance with him. She dexterously parried every attempt to draw her into a political discussion, and, when fairly cornered by a direct appeal, would laughingly protest that it was her first duty as a hostess to amuse her guests and not bore them with business. The utmost he could get from her was a half promise that she would not be the first to draw the sword. On the other hand, Catherine spared no pains to make her guest's visit as pleasant as possible. Gustavus, to his no small delight, found himself the lion of the day. Never had any foreign potentate excited so much interest in the Russian capital. The official press was under orders to belaud him. Catherine herself, with graceful tact, forbore to celebrate the customary anniversary service for Peter the Great's victory over Charles XII. at Pultawa, out of consideration for Charles XII.'s descendant, and the King reciprocated by laying the foundation-stone of the new church commemorative of the Russian naval victory over the Turks at Chesme. With the most distinguished Russian statesmen and *savants* for his cicerones, he visited all the public institutions *en fête*. Potemkin and

Rumyantsev showed him over the Arsenal and the Mint, Nartov explained to him the curiosities of the College of Mines, and Betsky was his guide over the Institution of Cadets. At an extraordinary session of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, in the presence of the court and all the foreign Ministers, he received a perfect ovation, but declined the throne prepared for him, and took his seat among the Academicians while Pallas read a paper on volcanoes, the president defended a thesis on the intellectual superiority of the eighteenth century, dexterously introducing a compliment to the crowned philosopher before him, and Sthelen read a letter from the Chinese missionary, Sibo, on a newly-discovered fungus. Curious and precious gifts were presented to him at the library of the Institute, in the belvedere of the Observatory, and in the typography of the Academy; and upon his expressing a wish to see the celebrated Gottorp globe, it was at once thrown open to his inspection, and he was invited to ascend into the little chamber inside, which he was astonished to find tastefully decorated with flowers and evergreens surmounted by the Gothland arms in white roses. But the society of the Empress was the greatest treat of all. She was his companion almost every day, and every day she grew more fascinating. He was with her at the performance of Marmontel's new opera, *Zemire et Azor*, at the Hermitage; he dined with her at the Nevskoi Monastery; he rode by her side at the review of the Imperial Guard, and he danced with her at a grand masquerade in the gardens of Peterhof. Finally, Catherine sent him away loaded with costly presents—rich furs unprocurable by money, the Alexander Nevsky order in brilliants, a cane the knob of which was a single diamond worth 60,000 roubles and richly studded with pearls. At the very moment when he was embarking, her favourite, Zorich, came on board with a mantle of blue fox-skin, "the best that our

climate can furnish," which he was to wear for her sake during the passage, lest his precious health "should suffer from the inclemency of the weather."¹ Gustavus, however, was not to be outdone in generosity. He presented the Empress with a huge uncut ruby (still the largest in the world), formerly belonging to Queen Christina, which he had abstracted for the purpose from the Swedish regalia, and which now forms part of the Russian. Her favourites and her kinsfolk had also reason to remember the munificence of the Count of Gothland for some time to come.

For all its brilliance, however, the Petersburg visit was, politically, a failure. Gustavus, indeed, professed himself more than satisfied with the Empress, and he pointed to their intimate correspondence as a great triumph. For Gustavus, in the exuberance of his enthusiasm, had proposed that henceforth they should address each other as *brat* and *sestra*,² and that their letters should be private and confidential, and sent direct through Postmaster Eck³ of Petersburg. Catherine laughingly consented, but she took very good care that politics should form no part of their correspondence. Whenever the King approached this forbidden subject, she would affect terror lest Counts Scheffer and Panin, the grim Chancellors, should get wind of this clandestine correspondence, and so threaten "Gus" and "Kitty" with the birch-rod. "What a pretty figure the *brat* and *sestra* would cut," cried she, "if their papas were to take them to task for their naughtiness!" No doubt her "darling brother" would airily turn upon his heel and pirouette away, but what would become of his "dear sister," who was not quite so nimble on her pins? On another occasion, when Gustavus pressed her to delimitate the Finnish frontier more exactly, she replied, "Leave,

¹ Grot, *Ekaterina II. i Gustav III.*

² The Russian for *brother* and *sister*.

³ By way of precaution, however, they were unsigned.

O leave, my dear brother, these frontier squabbles to those worthy gentlemen whose business it is to dive into circumstances, calculations, and conjectures; it is for them to get to the bottom of such matters."

And her actions were more significant than her words. At the very moment when she was coquetting with her cousin in honeyed words, she was forging a scheme to make him altogether inoffensive to his neighbours. The approaching Riksdag (1778) was to be used as a political engine against him. The malcontents of both parties were to be induced to formally invite Russia and Denmark to restore the Constitution of 1720, of which they were the guarantors, and thus give the allies a respectable pretext for an armed intervention. Simolin and his Danish colleague, Guldencrone, were to be the prime movers in the conspiracy, and both were well supplied with money for the purpose. Simolin began by sounding Pechlin, and that arch-intriguer, to whom the undermining of any established Government was simply the highest kind of sport, and who had a particular grudge against the Government of Gustavus III., at once fell in with his views. He advised Simolin to aim high and scatter his roubles freely, and engaged to set all the "patriots" of his acquaintance in motion. Senator Funck also offered his assistance, and Secretary Boye showed *his* sincerity by selling State secrets to the Russian Minister at a fixed tariff. Simolin's hopes rose high, his despatches grew every day more sanguine, and he insinuated that there was no single Swedish politician of eminence who was not convincible by golden arguments. At last he had the audacity to whisper treason in the ears of no less a person than Count Fersen himself, but the rebuff¹ he received from that quarter

¹ Fersen told him, amongst other things, that the Constitution of 1720 was so utterly detestable to the Swedish nation that it would endure anything from the present Government rather than see it restored.

at last opened his eyes, for he knew that without at least the passive support of Fersen he could make little impression on the Riksdag. It now became evident that the discontent of the Swedes had been rather too hastily assumed. So the Tsarina's interest in Swedish politics suddenly flagged, Simolin was recalled, and the Russian *chargé d'affaires*, Rückman, was instructed to keep his eyes open, but do nothing.

In the spring of 1778 European affairs were once more in a very critical condition. The flames of war appeared to be on the point of bursting forth simultaneously in three different quarters. In the East, Russia seemed bent upon provoking a fresh rupture with the Porte by a series of wanton outrages, which culminated in the forcible annexation of the Crimea, in direct violation of the Treaty of Kutchuk Kainardshi. In Central Europe, the attempt of the Emperor Joseph to wrest the Palatinate from Bavaria had aroused Frederick the Great from his long repose, and the veteran King and the aspiring young Kaiser stood face to face on the Silesian frontier at the head of their respective forces. Finally, in the West, the vacillating Government of Louis XVI. had been reluctantly compelled, by the pressure of public opinion, to recognise the independence of the United States of America (July 1778). Great Britain at once withdrew her ambassador from Paris, and a few months later hostilities began between the two countries without any formal declaration of war. Sweden was more or less interested in all three quarrels. The Porte was her natural ally against Russia; as Duke of Pomerania, the King of Sweden had a voice in German affairs, and innumerable treaties bound him to the French monarchy. Gustavus's head was busy at once with a hundred plans for making capital out of all these complications, and his attention was directed, first of all, to his ancient enemy Denmark. Toll was

sent thither to spy out the nakedness of the land and advise as to the practicability of a *coup-de-main* on Copenhagen. The report of that astute politician was highly encouraging, and Gustavus, having satisfied himself by a hasty incognito visit to Denmark in June 1778 that Toll's hopes were justified, was about to fall upon Denmark forthwith, when another sudden change of the political barometer again stayed his hand. The war-cloud which had been hanging over Central Europe dispersed. Turkey had not yet sufficiently recovered from the effects of the last war to think of engaging in another, and therefore was fain, in impotent wrath, to watch Russia slowly establish her influence over the Crimea. Catherine was now free to throw the whole of her enormous influence into the scale of peace. Just then she dreaded a European war, for she well knew that, once ignited, it could not be localised, and even her recently acquired Polish possessions might be endangered thereby. The vaulting ambition of the Emperor Joseph also alarmed her, and she readily listened to the flattering invitation of Frederick II. to come forward as the pacificatrix of Europe. When, then, the King of Prussia, during the summer of 1778, invaded Bohemia, the Russian ambassador at Vienna simultaneously delivered an ultimatum to the Austrian Chancellor, Kaunitz, to the effect that a special envoy—the famous Prince Repnin of Polish notoriety, one of the most audacious of Russia's soldier-diplomatists—was already on his way from the Russian capital to the Prussian camp to mediate between the belligerents. If, however, Austria spurned the proffered olive-branch, Repnin was under orders to draw the sword at once and support Prussia with 40,000 men, as the Tsarina could not behold with indifference the absorption of the Palatinate by Austria. Caught thus between two fires, the Court of Vienna was forced to give way, and a peace conference under the presidency of Repnin was opened at

Teschen, where, after months of furious altercation, the Bavarian difficulty was finally settled to the entire satisfaction of the King of Prussia.

Gustavus preserved a strict neutrality during these complications. His sympathies were with Austria as against Prussia, and with France as against England, but his correspondence with Ambassador Creutz shows how entirely he could separate his personal sympathies from his political principles. He was very wrathful with the French Ministry for siding with the Americans. "I cannot allow that it is right," wrote he, "to support rebels against their lawful King. Such an example" (as the rebellion of the American Colonies) "will find only too many imitations in an age when it is the fashion to overthrow every bulwark of authority. . . . Even if I regard the matter purely politically, I cannot approve of the war against England. When an absolute monarch engages in war, it must either be because he is attacked, or because he meditates conquests, or, finally, because he seeks that personal renown which the world is apt to attach to martial exploits. Now, France is not attacked; she will only ruin her trade without making any conquests, and her King is, unfortunately, a prince without any elevation of character. . . . Again, while French Ministers are meddling with English affairs, they leave the Empire altogether out of sight. . . . France's true policy is to unite with Prussia against the Emperor. The Elector of Hanover would then be forced to declare himself for the Court of Vienna. One French army ought then to cross the Rhine and deprive England of Hanover; another ought to attack the Austrian Netherlands. The Palatinate ought to be guaranteed to the Duke of Brunswick." This, he argued, would attach Brunswick to France, cut England off from the Continent altogether, and restore Bremen and Verden to Sweden, "their lawful owner." On another

occasion he thus recurs to the American war: "I must impress upon you the importance of conducting these negotiations" (for a fresh treaty with France) "with the utmost delicacy, so that the King of England may not be able to reproach me with holding with *his rebellious subjects*, for as such I shall ever regard them. This is a matter which concerns all kings. . . . I can never regard them" (the Americans) "as independent till the King of England has absolved them from their oath of allegiance."

Gustavus's firmness on this point was the more remarkable as, just now, the relations between Great Britain and Sweden were strained almost to a rupture. Every one knows that, during the American war, England claimed the right to search neutral vessels for contraband of war, and that she exercised this right in a high-handed manner which contrasted most unfavourably with the liberality of France in this respect. Finding it impossible to obtain redress from England, the Northern Powers exchanged notes as to the advisability of meeting force by force, and Gustavus (December 1778) instructed his Minister at London to deliver a remonstrance to the English Government couched in such sharp terms that Lord Suffolk expressed himself unable to distinguish it from a formal declaration of war. The insuperable jealousy between Sweden and Denmark, and the disinclination of Russia to offend England, prevented, for a time, the formation of a Northern League. Ultimately, however, each of the three Northern courts agreed to send a certain number of vessels into the German Ocean to convoy their own trading ships, and there, for a time, the matter rested. France had at first expected the active intervention of the Northern Powers in her favour, and, though moribund and insolvent, heroic were the sacrifices made by her Government to strengthen its ancient ally Sweden. In the autumn of 1778 the last subsidy treaty with Sweden expired,

and Creutz was instructed to move heaven and earth for a renewal of it, the amount to be raised to 2,000,000 livres annually. Necker, now Finance Minister, was only inclined to grant 1,000,000, but through the influence of Maurepas and Vergennes it was ultimately raised another 500,000. Further than that, however, France would not go, and accordingly an offensive and defensive treaty on that basis was signed between the two countries on December 2, 1778.

CHAPTER XIII.

"LE ROI S'AMUSE."

The court of Gustavus III.—The *levée*—Public ceremonial—Etiquette—Characteristic of Gustavus—Personal appearance—Sensitiveness—Amiability—Magnanimity—Mysteriousness—Courage—Early excesses—Abnormal restlessness—Versatility—Amusements of the court—Tournaments—*Divertissements*—Tableaux—Fancy fairs—Elegance of the Gustavan court—Immorality—Secretary Schröderheim—The King's pious fit—Converted by the mystic Halldin—The Swedenborgian mystics and swindlers—Ulfenklou — Palmstrich — Björnram — Plommenfelt — Raising spectres in Lofö church—A midnight *séance* at Plommenfelt's—Toll opens the King's eyes to these impostures—Disgrace of the mystics.

IN that memorable passage of his famous History which so shocked the austere morality of the great tribune Mirabeau, Gibbon has pronounced the period which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus the happiest and most prosperous in the world's history. Comparing small things with great, we may safely say that what the age of the Antonines was to ancient Rome, the reign of Gustavus III. was to modern Sweden. In both cases an empire founded by martial prowess, but sapped and shaken by corruption and civil discord, was arrested in its ruinous descent "by the firm but gentle hand of a prince whose character and authority commanded involuntary respect," and a bright interval of salutary repose and partial recovery supervened. In the case of Sweden this propitious interval is known as the Gustavan Era, and its hero and representative was the third Gustavus. Its duration was

brief enough—barely twenty years—yet the recollection of it will last through all time. "For Gustavus III.," cries the greatest of the Swedish poets, "came among us like Spring, and, in an instant, all the hidden forces of Nature burst into full bloom; the sources of life were opened and poured forth their abundance, and melody awoke on every side of him."

The court was naturally the focus whence this reviving influence radiated, the medium through which this new transforming spirit penetrated to the remotest corners of the land. In no other reign had the court such a hold upon the country, both for good and evil, as during the reign of the third Gustavus. It was as much the policy as the pleasure of the King to attract thither all that Sweden possessed of distinction and eminence, and those who were once drawn within its magic circle found it no easy matter to break away from it again. The outward pomp and dignity of the monarchy was revived and sustained by a new and elaborately splendid court ceremonial, carefully modelled upon that of Versailles—the Versailles of *le grand monarque* in his palmiest days. The deep dramatic instincts of the young King and his æsthetic tastes here stood him in good stead. The regulation of a code of etiquette was a work peculiarly his own. He entered *con amore* into its minutest details: not even such trifles as the rosette on a lady's slipper, the facings of a page's vest, were beneath his notice. Count Ehrensvärd,¹ the King's companion in these early days, has given us a vivid description of a day at the court of Gustavus III. It began, of course, with the *levée*. No sooner had his Majesty's hair been curled and powdered, than the folding

¹ Ehrensvärd's *Dagbok* is one of our best contemporary authorities for this period, and is much fairer than Fersen's *Historiska Anteckningar*. Schröderheim's *Anteckningar* are also most excellent, but refer to a rather later period. See also the Hamilton MS., as quoted by Schinkel, and the earlier part of Lars von Engeström's *Anteckningar*.

doors of the royal bedroom were thrown open, and the courtiers flocked in to see the King complete his toilet, the body-pages in attendance receiving each article of clothing separately from the hands of the first gentleman-in-waiting. Finally, the page on duty for the day handed the King's sword to the Lord Chamberlain, who, in his turn, presented it to the King. His Majesty then took a turn round and conversed for a few moments with those whom it was his good pleasure to notice. This, too, was the moment when distinguished visitors were introduced and presented. The doors of the staircase leading to the bed of state were then thrown open, and His Majesty, ascending to the bed-head, received the reports of the officers on duty at the palace, and gave the watchword for the day. Every Wednesday the King and Queen dined in public. On these solemn occasions their Majesties sat alone at a long table, the court standing around them at a little distance in respectful silence. Now and then the King would beckon one or other of the circle to his side, and exchange a few words with him, the favoured courtier all the time bending respectfully over the royal chair, and returning to his place with a low bow when the interview was over. After dining in state their Majesties played cards in state likewise. The select little group of dignitaries whom the Queen invited to make up a set at her quadrille-table stood around in silence, bowing every time they played a card. The Lord Chamberlain dealt for her Majesty. The King usually preferred *trente-et-quarante*, which was played with the same ceremony for about an hour and a half, when his Majesty would rise and push away his chair, which was a signal for the Queen to leave off play also. On the other six days of the week, however, the court etiquette was far less punctilious and exacting. Cabinet Councils then took up most of the King's mornings, and in the afternoon one of the royal readers (an actor generally)

read aloud for an hour or two to the court circle, the ladies sitting all the time round their frames or work-tables over work that was seldom finished, while the King amused himself by drawing designs for new palaces which were never built, or for new gardens which were never laid out. Sometimes, however, he would embroider bodices or waistbands for the ladies of the court. The subjects chosen for recitation were usually history, or the latest novelties from Paris. At nine o'clock the card-tables were brought in, and the company played at *biribi*, *vingt-un*, or *cavagnole* till supper-time, after which they broke up for the night, congratulating each other upon having spent the day so profitably.

It might be supposed that this complicated and exotic court ceremonial would soon have withered away in the rude atmosphere and uncongenial soil of Sweden, or, at all events, have stiffened into a dry and lifeless formality. But this was very far from being the case. Gustavus had the gift of making the stiffest pomp picturesque and graceful, the coldest ceremonial entertaining. The outward form of the new etiquette might be French, but its animating spirit was always Gustavan. Gustavus III., like Louis XIV., was the most finished gentleman at his own court. It was his amiable manners, his winning smile, his witty sallies and piquant grace which reconciled the Swedish nation to such daring innovations, and made even his *levées*, his court circles, his state dinners delightful. It should also never be forgotten that deep political motives lay at the bottom of what seemed to the superficial a mere frivolous pastime, to wit, the rehabilitation of the monarchy and the gradual transformation of the long-dominant aristocratic caste into a dependent court nobility, a sort of pretorian guard of royalty.

But after all, the new code of etiquette was as elastic as it was elaborate, and in the King's country residences in particular, where he spent by far the greater part of his time,

the court always lived *en déshabillé*. Gustavus always preferred the country to the town, and the number and beauty of his châteaux—the superb Drottningholm, the romantic Gripsholm, and the picturesque Haga, for instance—supplied his restless spirit with that variety of scene without which he would soon have found existence intolerable.

It was in these artificial paradises that the light-hearted young court frolicked away its days. Good or bad, whatever came thither in the name of pleasure was received with open arms. The King himself was the master of the revels, and only his fertile fancy and inexhaustible ingenuity could ever have made them what they were. Even those who had very little sympathy with the new order of things, and never could feel quite at home in this gay and giddy whirl, were unable to resist its fascination. Call it as frivolous, as fantastic as you will, yet, to use the words of a contemporary, “there was sunshine in it!” It was only when the “royal charmer”¹ was himself no more that the bright enchantment vanished, and men began to ask one another, in wonder, how trifles which seemed so tawdry in the ashen grey morning of reality could ever have had such a hold upon them.

Gustavus III. (for it is high time that we learnt to know something of the man as well as of the monarch) was a little above the medium height: on horseback he looked much smaller than he really was. His features were, on the whole, handsome, and even noble, but somewhat irregular, a slight depression of the left temple, due to a midwife's clumsiness at his birth, making the left side of his face appear somewhat oblique and sinister. His brilliant, large, blue penetrating eyes were much admired. His figure, though slight, was good, but as the left hip was a trifle higher than

¹ “*Tjusande Kungen*,” as Gustavus's admirers were never tired of calling him.

the right, he had a slight limp, which he very dexterously disguised by adopting betimes a peculiar mode of locomotion, something between a skip and a step. A hairless face, a ruddy complexion, a light and delicate frame gave him an effeminate appearance. His constitution was naturally frail, the slightest illness being attended by swoons. But this feeble body was the abode of a potent spirit which easily triumphed over physical weakness. Gustavus could work for days together in his cabinet with little food and less sleep, yet without any apparent effort, and during his Russian campaigns he underwent, with impunity, hardships which would have told upon the iron frame of Charles XII. himself. |

It was only natural that a prince whose exquisite manners made him the glass of fashion and the mould of form should be a prime favourite with the sex, and his court was notorious for the number and the beauty of its *belles*. But there was never a spark of love, or even gallantry, in his intercourse with his fair friends. He took an absorbing interest in their toilets, invented a new court costume for them, and many of them wore scarves embroidered by his own hand; but their charms were practised upon him in vain; no woman, his own mother excepted, ever had the slightest influence over him.

Nor can Gustavus be said to have ever had a friend of his own sex, in the truest sense of the word. Poet, wit, and humourist himself, he loved to be surrounded by humourists, wits, and poets, but his comrades were never his confidants. Even his so-called favourites were never favourites in the ordinary acceptation of the word. "I will venture to assert," says one¹ who knew him intimately, "that at no period of his life has any living soul possessed his entire confidence;" and when, during his first visit to Paris, Marmontel, whom he much esteemed, urged him to

¹ Elis Schröderheim, the Swedish St. Simon.

seek consolation for the loss of a beloved father in the society of his friends, he mournfully replied, "Kings have no friends!" Yet few have had so many and such ardent admirers, and the enthusiasm he elicited was due as much to his natural amiability as to his genius. No one ever had an ear so ready to listen to the complaints of misery or a palm so open to relieve it. A harsh or hasty expression very rarely escaped him. When insolence presumed too far, a single scathing look was sufficient. And this self-control is the more creditable as he inherited from his mother a violent and irritable temper. No one ever forgave the cruellest injuries so easily and so gracefully. But perhaps his most salient characteristic was an innate, almost disinterested, love of intrigue, a preference for tortuous ways and circuitous methods, a veritable passion for dramatic effect. Even if he desired a change in his own household, he would invariably negotiate and finesse instead of commanding. His acknowledged responsible Ministers (at least in his later days) were little more than dummies. The real conduct of affairs was managed through a host of secret agents in subaltern positions, who came and went mysteriously at the royal bidding, and knew no more than their master chose to tell them. Yet, for all his fondness for intricate and elaborate combinations, no man was ever so simple and direct when once the crisis had come. Then his decision was always instantaneous and irrevocable, and he carried it out with a self-reliance and a *sang-froid* which never faltered nor failed.

Gustavus's courage is undeniable, but it was certainly peculiar. His contemporaries may sometimes have doubted whether he was really brave, but history unhesitatingly claims him as one of her especial heroes. He had not, indeed, a martial temperament, that robust pugnacity which courts danger for its own sake. His delicate, sensitive

frame shrank instinctively from all perilous pastimes; yet, where the welfare of his beloved country was concerned, he could dare all things, and his imperturbable serenity in action was remarkable. "*Entre nous*," remarked the royal favourite, G. M. Armfelt, on one occasion,—"*Entre nous*, his Majesty is the biggest poltroon in the universe, but that does not prevent him from personally leading a forlorn hope against positions which *nous autres* regard as impregnable."

The weak points of Gustavus's character lay in the departments of religion and morals. A one-sided education, on the lines of the new French Philosophy, and the criminal frivolity of a Voltairean mother, sowed the seeds of a shockingly precocious immorality, which relaxed the whole spiritual fibre of the man. That Gustavus had but a weak hold on the great fundamental truths of religion and morality is clear from his constant tendency to degrade the former into a mere system of moral police and to confine the latter within a fair-seeming but illusory code of honour. Yet, after all, there was a mystic element in his nature which would never suffer him to be hostile, or even indifferent to religion, and the disasters of his later years turned his mind more and more towards spiritual consolations. Something, too, must certainly be allowed for the influence of race. It was not without reason that Gustavus was constantly boasting of his Vasa blood. He was, indeed, a typical Vasa. He possessed (or rather was possessed by) that inordinately exuberant imagination and that strange consuming restlessness which distinguished the princes of that famous family, and made them capable of everything or nothing, either heroes or madmen. A perpetual unrest marked all his actions, even the most trivial. His brain was always teeming with a myriad projects. His words were as volatile as his thoughts. He even moved as if his limbs were set on wires. He could never remain long in one place. His journeys resembled flights. He came

and went like lightning. To his travelling companions, perpetually in terror of their necks, his horses seemed Pegasus. His imagination seemed to embrace all subjects at once. Catherine II.'s occupation of the Crimea and the costumes for a new opera could occupy him at the same moment. In the midst of a thousand pressing perils, when a single false step might have cost him his crown, he could find time to compose comedies which still live, and write facetious letters on the "Arabian Nights." He would issue decrees and order banquets in the same breath. But nothing satisfied him for long. He was the first to see through the emptiness of his pleasures and his projects, and impatient disgust trod upon the heels of his enthusiasm. There were, however, two points as to which this essentially mercurial nature was as constant as the polar star—patriotism and prerogative. No man had ever a nicer sense of the duties and responsibilities of a king, no king had ever a more tender and anxious concern for the welfare and prosperity of his country.

The amusements of the court of such a monarch may have been frivolous, extravagant, and not always very innocent, but they could not fail to be graceful, splendid, and picturesque. The foreign Ministers, though they frequently rebelled against the new etiquette, unanimously agreed that Stockholm under Gustavus III. was the delight of the North.

Very soon after the King was firmly seated on his throne he revived the ancient tournament with a picturesque splendour and a vivid realism which recalled the dim heroic age of King Valdemar and his paladins. Gustavus entered into the spirit of the thing with characteristic ardour, and so long as the fit was on him, seems to have thought of nothing else. He rose at three o'clock every morning to practise tilting till noon, and spent the rest of the day over heraldic

registers and manuals of chivalry.¹ Cabinet Councils were postponed and current affairs left to his Ministers whilst his Majesty, amidst the blare of clarions and the roll of kettle-drums, marched in stately procession to and fro between the palace and the lists in the great market-place of Stockholm to attend the rehearsals. The ceremonious etiquette of the ancient joust was religiously followed. The contest took place within a barrier, in the centre of which was a purple-canopied dais for the Queen and court. The nobility and gentry occupied the amphitheatre according to rank, the common people stood outside the barrier. The King and his brother Charles, at the head of their respective quadrilles, armed for the fight in pavilions at opposite ends of the barrier. All the knights were armed *cap-à-pied*, with visors down, their esquires riding before them with their banners, and the pages following after with shield and lance. Each knight wore the colours of the lady of his choice, and his shield was painted with an emblem or device.⁽¹⁾ The King, whose crest was a golden lion rampant, wore armour encrusted with gems, and his charger, which bore on its head a huge waving white plume, was covered with a purple velvet shabrack trimmed with ermine and fringed with gold, while the silken saddle was ablaze with diamonds. Gustavus usually wore the colours of his French friend the charming Comtesse d'Egmont. Even after her death he remained faithful to her, merely adding a black cockade to the white, green, and purple ribbons of his lamented lady-love.

And if the tournaments were schools of chivalry, the so-called *divertissements*, or fairy-enchancements, with ballets and musical interludes, were schools of gallantry, where the court ladies also had an opportunity of shining. The most famous of these fêtes took place in the park of the Drottningholm Palace in September 1779. An enchanted palace, built of wood, and painted over to imitate stone, was built in

the midst of the rocks and groves of that picturesque landscape. The subject of this *divertissement* was taken from the old *chanson de geste*, "Amadis de Gaul." The King, his family, and his court represented the enchanter Arcelaus, the valorous Esplandian, the fair Leonorina, and all the other paladins and donzelles. The music was by Glück. The caparisons of the cavaliers and the dresses of the ladies are described by contemporaries as gorgeous beyond description, and the whole spectacle terminated with an opera and a grand illumination. Sometimes these entertainments took the form of historical *tableaux vivants*, as when the court of Queen Christina was reproduced. The great curiosity of this show was the concluding banquet, at which the guests were regaled with seventeenth-century dishes, served up with the sweet aromatic sauces of the period. Once or twice a sort of bazaar, in imitation of the fair of St. Germaine, was held, and the King, Queen, and royal Dukes kept booths, and sold their wares at purely fancy prices. At other times Olympus was represented. The Elysians revisited the earth, ancient heroes came driving along in triumphal cars, and Greek choruses sang odes in honour of chivalry.

None has ever denied that the court of Gustavus was a finishing school of manners. Long after his tragic death, long after the deposition of his unhappy son, when a new generation had sprung up and a stranger filled the Vasa's throne, the term *Gustavian* was still used to express the acme of good-breeding, and the few surviving Gustavians were distinguishable at once by a certain indescribable but unmistakable charm of manner, which was the envy of those who despaired of imitating it. But although a school of manners, the court of the royal charmer was very far indeed from being a school of morals. Gustavus himself was, in many respects, a true child of his age, and the views he held

on morality in general were then considered large, liberal, and enlightened. So long as those about him were loyal subjects, ardent patriots, and entertaining companions, they might say and do pretty much what they liked. His own private conduct, after his reconciliation with his consort, was respectable, and even exemplary, compared with that of his brothers; but his anxiety to oblige his friends and his guests made him look indulgently upon their pet vices. Thus, although he never allowed his brother Frederick's mistress, pretty Sophie Hagman, to be presented at court because she was a simple dairymaid, he would not hear of her being left in town when the Prince came to stay a month with him at Drottningholm, and located the young harlot in the prettiest rooms of the China Pavilion. "I will not have my brother inconvenienced in the least," said he; "I wish every one here to be perfectly at his ease." So, again, while constantly and sincerely deploring the perverse taste which preferred coarse farces and indecent operettas to the masterpieces of Molière and Corneille, he would look tranquilly on while his own kinsfolk acted in plays which had been prohibited for their indecency during the last reign. The court was naturally gay where the monarch was so little austere, and its follies, never very innocent, frequently became downright scandalous. The ladies who gave the tone at court showed by their own conduct that they regarded conjugal fidelity as an absurd anachronism, and the climax was reached when the beautiful Countess Höpken posed as the model for the sculptor Sergel's statue of the *Venus aux belles fesses*, while the Countess Oxenskjold ostentatiously wore phallic emblems on her bracelets. Even the court clergy seemed sadly forgetful of their sacred calling. Every Sunday morning courtly chaplains extolled, in florid periods, the clemency of Titus and the wisdom of Antonine, without once mentioning a higher Name; and every Sunday after-

noon prelates and priests were seen in the front row of the royal theatre loudly applauding the comedies of Molière. It was not till the King himself grew weary of these frivolities and began to turn his attention to more serious things that a change for the better began; but the change, when it came, was as odd as it was unexpected.

In the middle of March 1779 there was a marked change in the King's humour. Much of his natural gaiety forsook him. He had frequent sad and pensive fits. He began to inform those about him that he had made an unalterable resolution to henceforth dedicate his heart to religion, and, for a time, he really seemed to mean what he said. His attendance at divine service became more and more regular, and he was plainly much edified by the eloquence of an army chaplain whom the astute Secretary Schröderheim,¹ seeing which way the wind was blowing, introduced into the royal chapel. On Good Friday afternoon Gustavus went to listen to Pergolessi's Passion music—a thing he had not done for years—and went away much affected. Every one was amazed at this show of devotion; but those who saw his Majesty retire to his inner chamber after church and there diligently study the Scriptures were thunderstruck. What was the meaning of it all? Would it last? Some were amused, others embarrassed. The more cautious advised waiting a little longer to see what would come of it.

¹ Elis Schröderheim enjoys the rare distinction of being the King's one indispensable, inexhaustible companion, of whom he never tired. How indeed was it possible to tire of a man whose good-humour was perennial; who could make the most involved and intricate matters simple and easy, the driest and dullest engrossing and entertaining; who could always adapt himself to the ever-shifting moods of his royal friend, and whose exquisite tact, amiable *savoir faire*, and intimate knowledge of human nature were never at fault? Schröderheim's house was the favourite resort of Swedish society. At this time he united in his own person the apparently incompatible offices of Clerk of the Council, Minister of Public Worship, and Grand Herald. As a memoir writer Schröderheim is only surpassed by Saint-Simon.

Presently, His Majesty's piety took such an eccentric and fantastic turn that his best friends became anxious about his sanity. To begin with, the person who was commonly credited with his conversion was no grave evangelist, no devout ecclesiastic, but a half-crazy mystic lying in jail under sentence of death for high treason, who, on receiving a free pardon and a purse of fifteen ducats from the King, thought that the best way of showing his gratitude was to bring his royal benefactor to a knowledge of the truth. This was Johan Gustaf Halldin, the main object of whose life seems to have been to give a religious sanction to the trickeries of Cagliostro and the hocus-pocus of Mesmer by expounding them in the light of the Swedenborgian theosophy, of which he was a most fanatical disciple. Halldin began his proselytising mission with Secretary Schröderheim. One morning he stopped Schröderheim's carriage in one of the most frequented thoroughfares of Stockholm, and mounting on the carriage-step, introduced himself by there and then singing at the top of his voice the psalm, "How amiable are thy dwellings, O Lord of hosts!" from beginning to end. He followed this up by addressing a rambling, mystic, abusive letter to Schröderheim, one half of which was in bad Swedish verse and the other half in good French prose. A couple of days later, at a *levée*, the King took Schröderheim aside and asked him, with a smile, whether he had had the honour of receiving the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Schröderheim laughed at the allusion, and said he had. "I've been warned of it beforehand," replied the King, "for I myself have received the Second Epistle. You cannot have been more badly treated than myself. We will collate our epistles this afternoon, and in the meantime keep your own counsel." For the next two years the King and his friends received from this self-appointed hierophant daily, sometimes twice a day, mystical

incoherent epistles, full of threats, reproaches, dark prognostications, and Bible citations, chiefly selected from the Apocalypse. The queerest thing about this queer intercourse was that the King seems, for a time, to have really regarded this hair-brained gibberish as if it were a special revelation, and honoured Halldin as a prophet instead of locking him up as a lunatic. Honours and dignities were thrust upon him. He was appointed one of the royal secretaries (by the way, he was an excellent linguist), and became so influential that he actually persuaded Gustavus to allow a wild Swedenborgian ranter to spout forth his eccentric heresies from the pulpit of the chapel royal itself, to the horror of the orthodox and the amusement of the profane. For the moment it really seemed as if Swedenborgianism was about to oust the State Church from her throne. Swedenborgianism indeed was at this time passing through a critical phase of its history. It was at once an asylum for many whom the aggressive, dogmatic atheism of the new French philosophy had left spiritually destitute, and a happy hunting-ground for a host of crafty sharpers who made capital out of their weaker brethren. In Swedenborgianism the extreme rationalism and the extreme superstition of the eighteenth century joined hands, as it were. For that was the age when savants and sorcerers competed on equal terms for public favour, and those matured intellects which had outgrown the degrading superstitions of the Christian mythology received miracle-mongers like Cagliostro and Mesmer with the faith of little children. Sweden also had her *illuminati*, but there, where religion and morality were, so to speak, rooted to the soil, it is sometimes difficult to decide, in individual cases, where self-delusion ends and imposture begins. Decidedly the most respectable of the motley crew were the Swedenborgian fanatics whom Halldin introduced to the King. There was H. G. Ulfenklou, for

instance, whose specialities were astrology, chiromancy, geomancy, and hydromancy, but who was also on the most intimate terms with "all imaginable spirits," who assisted him in unearthing hidden treasures and manufacturing magic capes. There was Palmstrich, who styled himself "the true theosophist by the grace of God," who was also well versed in natural magic, including the divine, the angelic, and even the diabolic branches of the art. But his forte was alchemy, in which he was such a proficient that he expected to wake any morning the discoverer of the philosopher's stone. Yet this wonderful magician was regarded by his rival Nordenskjöld as "a vain and vicious person." Nordenskjöld professed to have carried the science of alchemy to its ultimate limits. He did not stop at the philosopher's stone. Communion with the spirit world had taught him a process whereby gold itself could be transmuted into the mystical *urim*, while diamonds could be spiritualised into the *thummim*, and he actually persuaded the King to fit up a laboratory near Drottningholm for the making of gold, though the whole affair was kept very secret for fear of scoffers.

Ulfenklou, Palmstrich, and Nordenskjöld¹ seem really to have believed in their own absurd pretensions. They were more deluded than deluding. When, however, we come to the mysterious Mr. Björnram and the ingenious Mr. Plommenfelt, we quit at once the spectre-haunted tracts of transcendental physics and find ourselves in the commonplace familiar regions of imposture pure and simple.

Very little is known of the Finn Björnram, so celebrated in the history of Northern necromancy, but the little we do know shows him to have been an apt disciple of that arch-impostor, Cagliostro. Even the not very gullible Schröderheim was completely hoodwinked by this pseudo-mystagogue. Björnram professed to receive his inspirations from an old

¹ See Sundelius, *Swedenborgianismens Historia i Sverrige*.

magician, who lived, when at home, somewhere among the morasses of Lapland. He also had recondite relations with the Rosicrucians of Spa, and used to raise ghosts in the midst of churches and churchyards. An eye-witness¹ has left us the following account of one of these dark *séances*, which is a fair specimen of them all.

"The bellringer of Lofö church told me, on one occasion, that a *séance* was to be held there at midnight, and he secreted me in a tower from whence I could see everything without being seen. Björnram and an assistant of his were the first to arrive, and were, as I had expected, the chief actors in this farce. No sooner had they entered the church, than they carefully closed the doors and unpacked a number of utensils. I was too far off to see exactly what they were. I saw very well, however, that they fixed to the chandeliers fine horse-hair threads, by means of which they hoisted up and down masks attached to a kind of light cotton stuff. When the machinery was quite ready, they strewed gunpowder all about the floor. Not long afterwards the King came in with five attendants. . . . The church was very dimly lit, and the gunpowder was presently ignited. The spectators were placed in a circle in a very awkward position with drawn swords in their hands. Björnram then began crossing himself and mumbling mystic gibberish, whereupon his assistant, who was concealed somewhere, very slowly hoisted up one of the masks with the white garment attached to it, which looked just like a shroud. The mask was supposed to represent King Gustavus Adolphus. It moved gently to and fro as it was drawn up, and was then hoisted down so gradually that it seemed to disappear. The second phantom, which represented King Adolphus Frederick, was manipulated in the same manner.

¹ See article "Hedin" in *Lexicon öfver namnkunnige svenska män*. Hedin, who was one of the royal physicians, tells his own story.

Although I had seen all the preparations beforehand, I must admit that the spectacle really had something awful about it. After both the phantoms had disappeared, what I take to be lycopodium powder was ignited, emitting a faint spectral glare. Then the spectators went away, and I crept down from my hiding-place."

Björnram's colleague and assistant was Anders Plommenfelt, the son of a wealthy merchant. Plommenfelt had a good natural wit but no application, an excellent memory, a bad judgment, and could be voluble in many languages. His figure was puny and ridiculous, character he had none. Returning to Sweden after a long European tour, he professed to have been initiated in all the mysteries of Continental Freemasonry, a profession sufficient of itself to bring him to the notice of Duke Charles, who introduced him to the King. Plommenfelt also professed to have received direct communications from "the Supreme Being;" to hold half the spirit world at his beck and call; to interpret dreams and unveil the future. One Good Friday he invited the King, the royal Dukes, Schröderheim, and a few more of the initiated to witness his supernatural manifestations. The company, after a six hours' fast, assembled at noon at the lodgings of the seer. At the stroke of midnight Plommenfelt appeared in a long sable robe with dishevelled hair and ghastly distorted countenance. In his hands he held a huge crucifix. He beckoned his guests into an inner chamber, and placing them round a circle which he traced upon the floor with a piece of chalk, took his stand at a little table in the centre. For three-quarters of an hour he went through all sort of antics with charcoal, chalk, blood, mirrors, and hot stones. Then loud raps were heard all round the walls which Plommenfelt announced to be spirit communications. Many of those present fancied they saw and heard still stranger things, "but for my own

part," adds Schröderheim, from whom this description is taken, "I can say that absolutely nothing came of it at all."

It is melancholy to reflect that a man of Gustavus's genius should so long have been hoodwinked by such mummeries; but his eyes were opened at last, and the man who brought him back to reason was Toll. Toll's profound common-sense and earnest practical piety could never be imposed upon, and it is therefore not to be wondered at that both Björnram and Plommenfelt both detested and maligned him. When, therefore, in 1782, Gustavus sent him to Aix-la-Chapelle and Spa to investigate the claims to transcendental knowledge professed by a certain Baron Reuschenberg and other Rosicrucian mystics, Toll at once seized his opportunity of dealing this fashionable spiritualism its death-blow. He had several conferences with the German occultist, and even visited the famous Cagliostro himself, whom he had no hesitation in pronouncing an arrant impostor; in fact, he came away with the conviction that all these so-called spiritual manifestations were mere "vapours and will-o'-the-wisps." It required some courage to disabuse the King of his fancies, but Toll did his duty like a man. The faith of the King in these modern miracles was now considerably shaken, and the fall of the false prophets was not very far off. The ghostly Plommenfelt got into trouble for attempting to defraud his creditors. The mysterious Björnram vanished so suddenly and so completely that history to this day has never been able to make out what became of him. The alchemists Palmstrich and Norden-skjöld, in their search after the philosopher's stone, worked themselves down to the beggar's staff. Even Halldin at last went just a step too far when, in 1788, he coolly informed the King that he, Gustavus, had reached a point in his evil career which exactly corresponded to sixteen degrees

among the damned in hell, which meant a purgatorial probation in the next world of a century and a half at least. After this he could not of course expect to retain either his secretaryship or his influence, and his co-religionists shared his disgrace.

CHAPTER XIV.

GUSTAVUS AND HIS FAMILY.

Louisa Ulrica's jealousy of her son—Her nagging correspondence—Her joy at the revolution—The quarrel about the bodyguard—The Duke of Sudermania—His marriage—The little Duchess—Reconciliation of the King and Queen—Equerry Munck the intermediary between them—His brusqueness and audacity—Consummation of the marriage—Pregnancy of the Queen—The Swiss J. F. Beylon—The Queen Dowager insinuates that the Queen Consort has committed adultery with Munck—Explosion at court—Humiliation of the Queen Dowager—Sensation caused by this scandal both at home and abroad—Birth of the Crown Prince—The four Estates made his sponsors—Fresh indiscretions of the Dowager—Final rupture between her and the King—The christening—General rejoicings—Death of the Queen Dowager.

OF no man can it be more truly said that the worst foes of his peace were those of his own household than of Gustavus III., and by a cruel irony of fate the one woman in the world whom he really loved and trusted was the prime cause of all his domestic misfortunes: that woman was his own mother. The sole and simple cause of the strained relations between mother and son was due to the natural repugnance on her part to take the second place at court after having usurped the first for near twenty-five years, and an equally natural determination on his part to be master in his own house. The loss of "her old man," as Carlyle¹ irreverently calls him, was at first a terrible blow to Louisa Ulrica; but, within two months of his death, her interest in things mundane had sufficiently revived to enable her to make a

¹ In "Frederick II."

stand for what she deemed her rights, and Gustavus, on his return from Paris, bitterly complained to his uncle Frederick that, in winning a crown, he feared he had lost the heart of a parent: it was a distinct relief to both parties when the testy Dowager was induced to accept an invitation to Berlin, and departed thither with a slender suite. During the whole of her visit at Potsdam, Louisa Ulrica harassed her son with a correspondence¹ which shows what a consummate professor of the science of nagging she really was. Her letters literally bristle with those wordy darts and arrows, the gibe, the taunt, the sneer, the insulting comparison, the disparaging innuendo, the ironical condolence, the martyred resignation, which prick and sting even when wielded by the clumsiest hands in their rudest shapes; but which pierce to the very quick, and rankle in the wound when tipped with the venom of a malignant wit, and directed with the unerring precision of a long-practised aim. Every step of her son's political career is subjected to a running fire of hostile comment. While he was still uncertain how much longer he would keep his crown, she persisted in plaguing him with her private interests, and her demands were as peremptory as they were irrational. And yet, with true feminine inconsistency, after writing her son letters in which there are almost as many insults as words, she affects amazement at his want of tenderness in replying to her so briefly and so drily. The very letter in which she announced her return home concluded with these words: "I quit this abode of bliss in order to return to hell. I mean to live in complete seclusion far away from every one. God grant it may not be for long!" At Stralsund a royal courier met her with the glad tidings of the revolution. This for the

¹ Chiefly to be found as appendices to Fersen's *Anteckningar*. Extracts are also given in the Gustavan Papers. These letters, which Carlyle does not seem to have known, give many interesting details about Frederick the Great.

moment changed everything. Louisa Ulrica was literally beside herself with joy. "Yes, you are indeed my son, and worthy to be my son," she wrote in an access of enthusiasm. "God bless you in all your undertakings. . . . This reconciles us for ever. But oh, my beloved Gustavus! never forget that you are human; do not abuse the power which God has given you. . . . I am quite bewildered with joy. So you love your old mother after all, eh? I will fly to your arms, and perhaps I shall die for joy!" This outburst of natural affection was, however, only momentary, and within a few weeks of the Dowager's return to Stockholm a violent quarrel took place, which resulted in the first complete rupture.

It appears that the King had rewarded the services of his life guards during the revolution by solemnly promising that from henceforth they should attend upon nobody but himself. Now, as his mother, while Queen Consort, had enjoyed the distinction of a guard of honour from the same corps, she rightly interpreted its withdrawal as an outward and visible sign to all the world that her power was for ever gone, and her emotion when she no longer saw the familiar uniforms before her doors was indescribable. There was an open rupture, and all attempts to patch it up again failed. In a word, Gustavus conceived that his royal dignity was here called in question, and on that point he was always inflexible. At the same time he was most anxious to give the Dowager ample reparation for the imagined slight. He increased her annual income by nearly £4000. He purchased and fitted up for her, at considerable expense, the castle of Fredrikshof, and he paid the debts of her younger children. Louisa Ulrica sulkily accepted these gifts, but not for three years could she find it in her heart to forgive her son for robbing her of her guard of honour.¹

This unhappy schism extended to all the other mem-

¹ She was forced to be content with guards in the royal livery.

bers of the royal family. Prince Frederick and the Princess Sophia Albertina, who had always been their mother's darlings, now took her part, while Prince Charles, whom she had never noticed except to snub, sided with his elder brother. The Duke of Sudermania, as we must now call him, was a very poor creature indeed. His natural parts were small, and education had done little for him. A grovelling sensuality unrelieved by a single spark of romance, and an idiotic superstitiousness which had not the remotest connection with religion, were the leading traits of his character, so far as he can be said to have had any character at all. The most creditable part of his career was while he remained under the firm and vigilant control of his elder brother, but after the assassination of Gustavus he sank at once and for ever to his naturally low level. How strong Gustavus's influence over him really was at this time may be gathered from the fact that he actually persuaded him to do what he always protested he never would do—marry. As a very loose liver, the Duke naturally shrank from the restraints and the responsibilities of wedlock, and on the eve of the revolution he had actually extorted from his royal brother a solemn promise that he would never compel him to contract the odious tie. But Gustavus himself was now growing anxious about the succession to the throne. He himself was childless, and, according to all appearance, likely to remain so. It was therefore necessary that another member of the family should perpetuate the dynasty, and that duty naturally devolved on the Duke of Sudermania as being the next heir to the throne; so the Duke, after much grumbling, consented to sacrifice himself for the good of the family, and was married in July 1773 to his cousin, the Princess Hedwig Elizabeth Carlotta of Holstein-Eutin.

With "the little Duchess," as she was called, a new and reconciling element entered into the Swedish royal family.

Few persons have ever been more universally respected and beloved than this amiable Princess, who, at the age of sixteen, exchanged the rustic seclusion of an old-fashioned German country-house for the perilous attractions of a brilliant court. From the very first her natural gaiety and good-humour interested every one in her behalf. Judged by the high Gustavan standard, indeed, she could not be called beautiful, for though well-made, she was diminutive, and too lofty a forehead disturbed the symmetry of otherwise regular features. The hypercritical complained, moreover, that her deportment left much to be desired in point of dignity; that she laughed too often and too loudly, and had the villainous habit of making faces; but her frank and engaging manners, generous and feeling heart, and, above all, her unerring tact, which never gave or took offence, speedily won her a whole host of friends, and throughout the four-and-forty years of her residence in Sweden, not the shadow of a suspicion ever fell upon her character, a fact so much the more to her credit as she was very speedily deserted by her worthless husband. At first, however, they lived together in perfect harmony, and within twelve months of the marriage the King and the whole court had got it into their heads that the Duchess was actually pregnant, and the succession to the throne established beyond the possibility of a doubt. The Court physicians accordingly laid the Duchess between the sheets, bled her freely and administered medicine in heroic quantities to prevent a miscarriage. The doctors, however, were puzzled, for none of the usual symptoms of pregnancy supervened. The condition of the patient flatly contradicted the verdict of the court. She herself obstinately denied that she was in an interesting condition, and bitterly complained of the rigorous regimen she had to undergo. But as every one persisted in telling her that she knew nothing about it,

she ended by believing them ; so prayers were offered up in all the churches in the realm for her safe delivery, and she was conveyed by easy stages to the Drottningholm Palace, that the happy event might take place there. Gustavus occupied himself meanwhile with arranging the ceremonial of the lying-in of the Duchess and the christening of the child, which, if a boy, was to be called Adolphus Frederick. The King and the Countess Sprengtporten, the Duchess's chief lady of the bedchamber, had laid their heads together, and, after long and patient calculations, arrived at the conclusion that the happy event must, at the very latest, take place on October 24. Twenty cannons were hastily brought all the way from Stockholm, planted before the palace, and loaded, the gunners standing behind them with lighted fusees, ready, at a moment's notice, to fire a royal salute, and an officer was on duty day and night in the Duchess's antechamber ready to give the signal. But the 24th came and went, and then the doctors discovered that the Duchess had never been pregnant after all. So the elaborate programme of the ceremonial was thrown behind the fire ; the cannons were hastily removed, and Hedwig Carlotta reappeared in public with as slim a waist as on her wedding day, and danced at all the court balls as if nothing had happened, while all the time supplications for her safe delivery continued to be devoutly offered up in many of the out-of-the-way country churches till the month of December.¹

But this comedy had at least one very important consequence. It kindled in the heart of the King a strong desire to have heirs of his own body, and he therefore began to seriously meditate a reconciliation with his consort. His brother's hopes of obtaining issue convinced him that he also need not despair ; but pride, false shame, and a very

¹ Compare Fersen's *Historiska Skrifter*, Bd. III., and Ehrensvärd's *Dagsbok-anteckningar*.

natural disinclination to own that he had been in the wrong, long prevented him from resuming cohabitation with the Queen, with whom he had scarcely exchanged a syllable for six years ; while the morbidly timid Sophia Magdalena, whom long neglect had made more frigid and reserved than ever, was about the last person in the world to take the first step towards such a reconciliation. At last the King so far overcame his bashfulness as to open his heart on the subject to two of his comrades, Count Ekeblad and Baron Ehrens-vård, who applauded his good dispositions and laid stress upon the manifold advantages of a reconciliation between the royal consorts. Gustavus agreed with them, but remarked at the same time that his unhandsome conduct towards his wife in the past, the impossibility of justifying himself, and the delicacy he felt in breaking the subject to her, were so many insuperable obstacles in his way. Some one who possessed his confidence without being distasteful to the Queen must first be selected to act as a go-between and arrange the preliminaries. Ekeblad at once suggested Equerry Munck as the very man for such a delicate negotiation. True, his youth and his brusque manners were against him ; but his devotion to the King was above suspicion ; he had never been mixed up in the disputes of the royal family ; and, best of all, he was engaged to Miss Ramström, one of the Queen's maids of honour, and was therefore on terms of intimacy with all her ladies, without whose co-operation nothing could be done. Finally, Munck was a man of singular frankness and tenacity of purpose, who would always go straight to the point, and never laid his hand to anything in vain. After some hesitation the King consented to employ Munck, who set to work at once with a zeal and determination which left nothing to be desired. He began by confiding the secret to all the Queen's ladies ; obtained through them an audience with her, and without any pre-

amble bluntly told her that the King earnestly desired a reconciliation, and was only kept back by the fear that she would not or could not forget the past. The Queen was so overjoyed that she forgot her habitual bashfulness; expressed her desire to see the King on the spot; and sent him a miniature of herself accompanied by a very affectionate letter. Gustavus now hesitated no longer. Attended by Munck, he made his way to the Queen's apartments by a private staircase; begged her forgiveness upon his knees; made a general confession of his sins—in fact, said everything that was necessary to obtain plenary absolution. This was all very well, but the marriage of Gustavus and Sophia Magdalene had never yet been consummated, and till this was done the reconciliation could not be regarded as satisfactory. Nevertheless a false shame prevented Gustavus from cohabiting with his wife after being, as he expressed it, *decouché*, for five years, and but for the fresh intervention of the energetic equerry, it is doubtful whether this consummation so devoutly wished for would ever have taken place at all. Munck, however, rose at once to the level of the emergency. He led Gustavus to the Queen's bedroom; assisted him to undress, and then discreetly withdrew to the adjoining ante-chamber. But he had not stood sentinel there for more than a quarter of an hour when he was rejoined by the King. Munck, much astonished, brusquely asked him what had brought him back so speedily, and not considering his reply satisfactory, wasted no more words upon his royal master, but catching him up in his arms as if he had been a baby, carried him back by force to the nuptial chamber, locked all the doors, and only came back to fetch him away at five o'clock next morning. For six successive nights Munck escorted the King backwards and forwards in the same way. The reconciliation was then made public, and the spouses continued to cohabit as if

there had never been the slightest estrangement.¹ All who had contributed to bring about this reconciliation were richly rewarded, and their Majesties seemed to despair of sufficiently showing their gratitude to Munck. The Queen gave him her portrait in brilliants; a life pension of £100 a year; a gold watch and other presents to the value of £1150. The King was even more gracious, and the distinction with which he treated the lucky equerry excited the lively jealousy of all the other favourites. Shortly afterwards mother and son were also reconciled. Gustavus promised to pay his mother's debts, which amounted to about £16,000, and at the same time informed her of his hopes of ere long presenting her with a grandson. The Dowager was full of congratulations, and the next three years were perhaps the happiest period of Gustavus's life.

In September 1775, the Queen had a miscarriage, but in February 1778 the King felt justified in informing his friends that his spouse was really about to present him with an heir. Strange to say, the good news seems to have disagreeably surprised the King's mother and brothers. The Duke of Sudermania, who, so long as Gustavus continued childless, was the nearest to the throne, felt himself defrauded of his rights, and the Queen Dowager, who was busy just then with plans for settling her youngest and favourite son, the Duke of Ostrogothland, was stung to the quick by the reflection that her detested daughter-in-law might, after all, become the mother of the future king. So the injudicious and malignant old woman willingly lent her

¹ Our authorities for this curious reconciliation are the King's own "*Pro-memoria*" to Frederick II. of Prussia in 1778; Fersen's *Historiska Skrifter*, vol. iii.; the Gustavan Papers and Beskow's *Gustaf den Tredje som Konung och Menniska*. Beskow supplies many details not to be found in the Gustavan Papers, but Fersen's account is by far the most circumstantial. Fersen professes to have received his account from Beylon (of whom more anon), and therefore at first hand, but there is good reason to believe that Fersen has considerably embellished Beylon's narrative.

ears to the scandals that always haunt a court, especially such a court as that of Gustavus III., readily believed what she wished to believe, and, in a rash moment, committed the crowning blunder of her life. There was at this time at the Swedish court a simple Swiss gentleman, whose position in history is as unique as his character. Eighteen years before, Louisa Ulrica had desired the Estates to find her a French reader, and through the good offices of the Swiss pastor at Stockholm, Jean François Beylon, a native of Lausanne, obtained the post. To a pleasing figure, engaging manners, and a cheerful disposition, he united many accomplishments, and in four years time found himself absolutely indispensable to the Swedish court. His reputation for secrecy, sincerity, and unselfish loyalty soon became proverbial; he was treated with universal respect and consideration, and, very much against his will, became the confidant, in matters both private and political, of every member of the royal family. He was the constant peacemaker, who enabled the Queen and her children to live together in something like harmony; the most difficult and delicate political negotiations¹ were frequently intrusted to him, and the leaders of the opposite factions united in respecting the man who never used his exceptional position for his own advantage, and constantly refused the rewards he had the right and the power to claim. Not without reason did Gustavus give the name of "the family mentor" to this most faithful servant, and to the very last Beylon continued to deserve the name. So now, too, a few days after Gustavus had broken the news of the Queen's approaching confinement to her, the Queen Dowager sent for Beylon, and, with every expression of rage and scorn,

¹ Thus, in 1769, he arranged the details of a Swedish revolution with the French Premier at Paris, and without his ready aid the revolution of 1772 would have broken down for want of money. He died in 1779.

said that an infamous conspiracy was afoot to deprive her younger children of their ancestral throne, as the expected heir was none other than the fruit of the Queen's adultery with Equerry Munck, and she would prove it. The honest Swiss was thunderstruck. At first he thought the Dowager had taken leave of her senses, and he earnestly besought her to keep her doubts to herself. By what right, he asked, did she dare to determine the legitimacy or illegitimacy of a child which was recognised by its own parents. But Louisa Ulrica began talking wildly of bringing the King to justice if he dared to lend his hand to so detestable a fraud, and vowed that, in order to get to the bottom of the hideous conspiracy, she would get her son Charles to bully a full confession out of Equerry Munck. Beylon pointed out that all this was utter nonsense. "The most audacious prince in the whole world," said he bluntly, "would have to get up very early in the morning to extort any such confession out of me, and Equerry Munck is not the man to be bullied by anybody." He then pointed out, as calmly as possible, that her proposed line of conduct was highly treasonable as well as highly indecent and ridiculous, and that she might be quite sure that the King would visit with the most exemplary severity any such outrage upon his honour. These representations seem to have somewhat calmed the excited Dowager, and on Beylon quitting her (he was closeted with her all the afternoon), she promised to keep her suspicions entirely to herself. He had scarcely left her, however, when her feelings again became too much for her, and sending for her son Charles, she told him the whole story, and ordered him to catechise Munck at once.

The mischief was now done. The Duke of Sudermania immediately charged Munck with the crime, and advised him to make a clean breast of it. Munck naturally fired up, gave the Duke the lie to his face, and posting off to the

King, told him everything, and demanded instant and complete satisfaction. An interview between the brothers at once took place. The Duke, to clear himself, accused his mother; Beylon felt bound to confirm the Duke, and so it appeared that the prime mover in this intended conspiracy against the expected heir-apparent was none other than the Queen Dowager.

The King was terribly upset, but what appeared to wound him more than anything else was the thought that his own mother should have thought him capable of such an infamy. Meanwhile the scandal circulated by the Queen Dowager had reached the ears of the Queen Consort, who at once sent for her husband, and falling at his feet, compelled him to grant her the first boon she had ever begged of him in her life, which was that she might never see the face of her mother-in-law again. The King was too agitated for the moment to deny such a request, but, anxious as usual to save appearances, he implored Sophia Magdalena to appear, if only for a few moments, on the following day, at an entertainment in honour of his mother's birthday, which could not be postponed without causing a public scandal, and to this the Queen very reluctantly consented. The King had then a very long and stormy interview with his mother, who was quickly cowed, not so much by his arguments as by his indignation. Gustavus did not spare his mother, and after bitterly reproaching her, declared that for the comfort and convenience of all parties she would do well to quit Sweden altogether and reside for the rest of her life in Pomerania. On the following day the fête in honour of the Queen Dowager, the rehearsals of which had occupied the court for the last three weeks and had cost the King some £2000, was duly celebrated, with what feelings may well be imagined. Never had the King's self-control been put to so severe a test. Arrayed as a Cossack

Hetman, he had, at the head of his Tartar retinue, to meet his mother, who came to the spectacle as a Chinese empress, and address her in the most affectionate and respectful language. Nobody who saw mother and son together on this occasion could ever have supposed there was the least difference between them. The Queen Consort, on the other hand, less versed in dissimulation, could not contain herself, but turned her back upon her mother-in-law in presence of the court and declined to appear at supper. The same evening the King took to his bed. The agitation of the last few days and the efforts he had made to conceal it proved too much for his feeble health. When he reappeared at court, it was plain to all "that his mind was even sicker than his body."¹

The question now was, what was to be done with the Queen Dowager? A large and influential party at court was for immediate banishment over the water, and assured the King that he would have no peace until she was gone. But an equally influential party advised Gustavus not to go so far, and strenuously laboured to bring about a reconciliation, aided by all the other members of the royal family except the person most aggrieved, the Queen. The little Duchess was the life and soul of the peacemaking party, which at last prevailed, and the King good-naturedly consented to forgive his mother, on condition that she signed a solemn declaration that all the calumnies and injurious reports affecting the honour of the Queen were, in her opinion, baseless libels. This document was drawn up by Chancellor Scheffer, was subscribed by Louisa Ulrica in the presence of the royal family and the full Senate, countersigned by a Minister of State, witnessed by the two Princes, the two Princesses, and seven Senators, and then deposited in the public archives; and so the curtain fell upon the first act of this domestic drama.

¹ Carl Sparre's *Dagbok*, quoted by Odhner.

This scandal naturally caused a great stir both at home and abroad. In Sweden the common people were on the Queen Consort's side, or, as they quaintly expressed it, *för frun i huset och emot enkan utom staketet*.¹ Abroad, too, public opinion, on the whole, was against the Queen Dowager, although Frederick II., for political reasons, took his sister's part. Even Catherine II., to whom Ulrica also appealed, bluntly advised her to be reconciled to her son at any cost.

For the next three weeks there was a tacit truce between the court of the King and the court of the Queen Dowager. Gustavus was busily preparing for the confinement of his consort and the meeting of his Parliament. The political history of this obsequiously royal Riksdag has been elsewhere described;² here we have only to do with the part the Estates took in the christening of the heir to the throne, for Gustavus had determined to give that ceremony a national character, and the four Estates were to be the only sponsors of his first-born. In his speech from the throne on October 30, the King thus alluded to the coming event which was to secure the succession and complete his felicity: "But a few days more and then I hope to confide to your arms the treasure which Providence has reserved for the comfort of my age and the support of my throne. And to whom indeed could I more confidently intrust that which, next to this realm, will be dearest to me in the world than to you, ye good lords and commons, who here represent the whole Swedish nation? . . . And should an heir to the throne be born to us, then never forget that you have carried him in your arms to the altar of the Lord, and have there set the seal of religion upon the obligations which already unite you to him. May he one day be worthy to ascend the

¹ For the wife indoors and against the widow outside the palings.

² Chapter XI.

throne of Gustavus Erickson and Gustavus Adolphus ; but should this child ever forget the precious duties which are laid upon him from the first hour of his existence, should he ever forget that the first duty of a Swedish king is to love and honour a free people, should he ever turn aside from the path which his great ancestors have trodden before him, then indeed, however great my joy at receiving him, however great my sorrow at his loss, I should regard it as an act of mercy if the Almighty were to take back His gift. For I should be inconsolable if I thought that, after my death, my own flesh and blood could one day forget that, if Providence has set them as rulers over a great kingdom, they have at the same time received the charge of free and magnanimous subjects whose happiness and prosperity are confided to their hands."

And two days later Gustavus was indeed able to clasp in his arms the long and eagerly desired heir to the throne. The Swedish Chancellor and six Senators were in attendance at the Queen's bedside, to witness and record the arrival of the little stranger. The Queen's antechamber was thronged all night by a crowd of Ministers of State, magnates, and court dignitaries, who had free access to the bedchamber, the doors of which stood wide open by royal command. The joy at the birth of the Crown Prince was indescribable, and the members of the royal family, seizing their opportunity, fell down on their knees before the King, and implored him to crown his own and their felicity by a complete reconciliation with his mother. Unfortunately, the bitter memories of the past were still too strong within him to be completely repressed even at that moment, and the letter in which he informed his mother of the birth of her first grandson was hard, cold, and reproachful, naturally stung the Dowager to the quick, and drew from her the following reply :—

"I am a mother, and that sacred character, which shall never be effaced from my heart, will always make me sincerely participate in the happiness of your Majesty. I look to time to *tear aside the veil which now covers your eyes*, you will then do me justice, and regret the harshness you have used towards a mother who will never cease to be," &c. &c.

If there had been very little filial piety in the King's letter to his mother, still less trace of motherly affection was there in her curt rejoinder, and, under the circumstances, the unfortunately ambiguous expression about *the veil which covered his eyes* could only have one meaning.

It was now nearly ten o'clock, and all Stockholm was astir. The streets were lined by a noisily loyal mob, eagerly awaiting the royal procession from the palace to the cathedral, where a grand thanksgiving service was to be held. At the palace, nobles, bishops, burgesses, and peasant deputies elbowed each other in the splendid saloons. Satisfaction and curiosity were written on every face. The joy at the happy delivery of the Queen was hearty and universal, and from time to time impatient glances were cast at the door of the royal cabinet, where, it was whispered, his Majesty was awaiting a letter from his mother which was to put an end, once for all, to the unhappy differences which had so long divided the royal family. Suddenly the door of the cabinet was flung violently open, and the King, as pale as ashes and trembling in every limb, rushed into the grand saloon. Forcing his way through the astonished throng to where the members of his family were standing, he thrust a letter into Prince Frederick's hand, and cried, "There! read it and see what you have done." The Prince read the letter and fell moaning to the ground, the little Duchess had an

attack of hysterics, and the other members of the family were similarly affected. In five minutes every one in the room knew the contents of the disturbing letter, and the indignation against the Queen Dowager was universal. Every one present, from the lowest lackey to the highest Senator, furiously inveighed against her. Quick as thought, garbled versions of what had happened passed from the mob inside the palace to the mob in the streets below, and in half an hour all Stockholm actually believed that the Queen Dowager had hatched a plot against the life of the new-born Prince: had Ulrica ventured to ride through the streets that day, as she originally intended, she would have run the risk of being stoned to death. Fortunately for her, the King had already peremptorily forbidden her to show her face at the palace, in a letter which concluded with these words, "You have poisoned the happiest day of my life. Enjoy your revenge if you like, but for God's sake do not expose yourself to the fury of the rabble. Stay at home and spare me the humiliation of seeing my people insult my mother in order to show their affection for me."

Meanwhile, on November 10, 1778, the little Crown Prince was baptized in the Chapel-royal, with the most imposing ceremony and the most enthusiastic rejoicing, though the Estate of Clergy was somewhat scandalised by the unwonted sight of an Archbishop and four mitred Bishops at the altar in gorgeous mediæval vestments. Delegates from the four Estates were present as sponsors, and they gave the child the name of Gustavus Adolphus in memory of Sweden's greatest king. The rest of the month was given up to festivities of all sorts. The city was splendidly illuminated at an enormous cost for so poor a land; the Municipality of Stockholm entertained the court at a grand masquerade ball, and allegorical figures repre-

senting Ceres, Bacchus, and Abundance, enthroned on gilded cars and escorted by masqueraders disguised as Greeks and Romans, distributed meat, wine, and commemorative medallions among the people. The Estates, much flattered at being chosen the sponsors of the new-born Prince, voted their godchild the handsome christening gift of eighteen tuns of gold (about £140,000), besides presenting her Majesty with six tuns of gold for herself. The King also was prodigal with his favours, and the speech in which he thanked the Estates for their loyalty and good-will moved the whole Assembly to tears. Gustavus always looked back upon that moment as the happiest of his reign.

Louisa Ulrica never saw her grandson till he was nearly four years old, and she was on her death-bed. Ever since November 1778, the Queen Dowager had lived in the strictest seclusion. Heartily detested by a nation she had always affected to despise; avoided like the plague by a court which only saw in her the worst enemy of their royal master; deserted by every one but her two youngest children, Prince Frederic and the Princess Sophia Albertina, and a few old servants who clung to her more from habit than affection, the miserable old woman sullenly brooded over her real and imaginary wrongs. And she had other besides sentimental griefs. Naturally wasteful and extravagant, she had never learnt to know the value of money, and though her present allowance was liberal, and even handsome, considering the expenses of the court and the poverty of the land, she could never keep her expenses within due bounds, and, if Fersen is to be believed, was frequently so involved as to have some difficulty in obtaining the necessaries of life. But her greatest grief, compared with which all others were mere trifles, was the continual estrangement from her eldest son; and it is only just to

add that Gustavus seems to have suffered as much from this cause as she did. Nevertheless, the son was too angry to forgive, and the mother was too proud to be forgiven, and so, for a time, the repeated attempts to bring about a reconciliation invariably failed. At last, in July 1782, when there could no longer be any doubt that the Dowager was seriously ill, the King sought an interview, and though repeatedly repulsed, persisted in his endeavours, and was finally admitted into the sick-room. The ordeal he had now to undergo was indeed a rude one. He had scarcely entered the room when the Dowager overwhelmed him with the most cruel reproaches. What had induced him to trouble her now after he had managed to live so long without her? Had he so few delights that he could not forego the pleasure of seeing her breathe her last beneath his very eyes? Did he imagine that she could not die in peace without his assistance? Did he think to impose upon her with the farce of a late repentance and an affected grief? All this she uttered in a loud voice, so that all the persons assembled in the ante-chamber might hear every word of it. Shocked and scandalised by such indecent conduct in one who could scarcely breathe and seemed every moment at the point of death, her attendants would have withdrawn, but she held them fast, and continued her invectives as long as she had the faculty of speech. When she was quite exhausted, Gustavus, whose self-control during this painful interview was admirable, again ventured to approach her, and by his repeated blandishments at last succeeded in mollifying the Dowager. After discharging all her venom, she melted into tears and embraced her son, who remained with her the rest of the afternoon. At five o'clock the little Crown Prince arrived. Louisa Ulrica embraced the child with the most demonstrative affection, and could only with difficulty be parted from

him. The little boy behaved very well, and repeatedly asked her in Swedish how she was ; but though only three years and a half old, the interview made an indelible impression on his mind, and he was frequently heard repeating to himself, for some time afterwards, the words, " Oh, that grandmamma, that grandmamma ! I never shall forget it ! " On the evening of the same day Louisa Ulrica slowly began to sink, and towards night fell into a lethargic sleep, which lasted till eight o'clock the next morning. She awoke, however, in a state of acute suffering, and her heartrending shrieks and piteous appeals to God to shorten her sufferings drove every one out of the room except her family and the physicians. It was not till five o'clock on the morning of July 16, 1782, that death released her from her torments. The decease of the Dowager was felt as a distinct relief by all who knew her, and the tranquillity of the court was henceforth undisturbed.

CHAPTER XV.

NEW MEN AND NEW SCHEMES—TRAVELS AND ADVENTURES OF THE COUNT OF HAGA.

Retirement of Chancellor Scheffer—Creutz succeeds him—Baron de Staël Ambassador at Paris—Sparre superseded by Toll and Trolle—Trolle Admiral-General—Toll War Minister—Disturbed state of European politics—Catherine II. and the Emperor Joseph's designs upon Turkey—Gustavus's hostility to Denmark—His interview with Catherine at Fredrikshamn—Departure of the King for Pisa—The secret Council of Four—Brilliance of Gustavus's suite—Its members—Hans Axel von Fersen—Maurice Armfelt—Adventure at Bistow—The Duke of Brunswick—Verona—Florence—Joseph II.—His opinion of Gustavus—Prince Charles Stuart—Rome—Pius VI.—Naples—Queen Caroline—King Ferdinand—General Acton—Catherine's hostile letter to Gustavus—Gustavus at Paris—Universal and extraordinary enthusiasm—The Petit Trianon—Tragic death of Peyron—Fresh treaties between Sweden and France.

FROM and after the year 1780, a great change is observable in the *entourage* of Gustavus III. During the previous decade he had been content to leave the government of the country in the hands of the ablest politicians of the old school, such as Ulrik Scheffer, Liljencrantz, Carl Sparre, and their fellows, as being the best men to nurse the country and husband her resources. But no sooner did the King begin to feel himself firmer in the saddle than he showed pretty plainly that he meant to go at his own pace, and the former responsible Ministers began to perceive that they no longer possessed the entire confidence of their master. Younger men with careers to make, who had grown up with the

King and sympathised with his adventurous projects, were pushing their way to the front. A new order of things was at the door. The first manifest sign of the impending change of system was the resignation of the Chancellor, Count Ulric Scheffer. That veteran diplomatist was shrewd enough to perceive that he had ceased to be indispensable, and much too proud to wait till he had become superfluous. It cost him little to retire. For two-and-forty years he had honourably served his country, and had nothing more to hope or fear from fortune. He could therefore plead old age and increasing infirmities with a good grace. Gustavus was loth to lose him, however. It is true that Scheffer had always been a very difficult man to deal with. His ideas had invariably to be followed. He would never suffer his despatches to be revised. His hard, cold, dry, official manner kept all the world at a distance. But his vast experience, incredible industry, and practical ability, the esteem in which he was held by the Empress Catherine, and his European reputation had long made him one of the pillars of the State. His masterly caution had long been the sole restraint upon the impetuosity of the King, and his retirement has been well compared to the snapping of a great brake.¹ He was succeeded by the amiable and gifted poet-diplomatist Creutz, who for the last seventeen years had so brilliantly represented Sweden at Versailles. A wail of anguish went up from the *élite* of French society when the most popular of ambassadors was recalled to the distant North. "Count Creutz," wrote Marie Antoinette to Gustavus,— "Count Creutz carries away with him the hearts of all who have had the privilege of his acquaintance." Gustavus dexterously utilised the popularity of the

¹ Schröderheim, who also tells us that Scheffer was the real author of the Armed Neutrality of the North, an honour subsequently claimed by so many other Northern statesmen, including Gustavus and Catherine.

departing ambassador to extract a new subsidy treaty out of Louis XVI., and no more eloquent proof of Creutz's extraordinary influence can perhaps be given than that, precisely when the barren glories of the American war had completed the financial ruin of the moribund French monarchy, the Swedish Minister should have been able to persuade France to pay Sweden 1,500,000 livres annually till 1789. A month previously a commercial treaty for fifteen years between Sweden and the United States had been signed by Creutz and Franklin.

Creutz's successor at the court of Versailles was Erik Magnus Baron Staël de Holstein, an elegant, comely, insinuating young dandy, who owed his rapid advance in the world to the favour of pretty women. While still a penniless young *attaché* at the Swedish Embassy he had had the audacity to sue for the hand of the wealthy Mdle. Neckar, and the influence of the French and Swedish¹ courts overcoming the scruples of the young lady's parents, Staël obtained the rich prize, after a five years' wooing, and the post of ambassador as well: at the express request of the Neckars, he was also created a Count with a corresponding allowance.

Meanwhile in Sweden still more significant ministerial changes were taking place. Scheffer had made way for Creutz, Sparre was now superseded by Toll and Trolle. As a friend of the Fersens, he had never been a *persona grata* at court, and the time having now arrived when the King needed the army and navy for his own secret purposes, it was essential that both these departments should be in the hands of confidential agents. So the control

¹ Gustavus, who disliked Neckar and disbelieved in Staël, was greatly against the match at first; but Creutz privately informed him that a Swedish Minister who was at the same time Neckar's son-in-law could do anything with the French court and the French people, and hinted pretty broadly that anybody else would be a *persona ingratisissima* at Versailles; so Staël got the post.

of the whole of the naval administration was given to Trolle, with the title of Admiral-General. For energy, skill, industry, and disinterestedness, the new Minister could scarcely be excelled. The great naval architect, Chapman, was appointed his coadjutor. Sparre still continued to be the nominal War Minister, but the real control of that department was now thrust upon John Christopher Toll, whose extraordinary administrative genius now had, for the first time, full and adequate scope. But Toll was surrounded by a host of watchful foes and rivals. His outspoken contempt for parliamentary procedure and official red-tapeism generally dismayed and disgusted the high-and-dry Constitutionalists, while the Opposition dreaded him as the one man capable of converting a limited into an absolute monarchy.

It was as the zealous and unflinching executor of Gustavus III.'s most daring schemes of political aggrandisement that Toll was especially remarkable. The time seemed at last to have come when Gustavus might, with perfect impunity, carry out his frequently postponed, but never abandoned, project of crushing the detested Danish monarchy. Continental affairs were again in a critical condition. The Peace of Versailles had scarcely given repose to Western Europe when the Eastern horizon was obscured by another dark war cloud. The restless and unscrupulous Tsarina had suddenly conceived the idea of driving the Turk out of Europe and re-establishing the Byzantine Empire beneath the sceptre of a Muscovite prince. As, however, it was scarcely to be expected that the rest of Europe would calmly acquiesce in such a drastic solution of the Eastern question, she meditated forming a coalition sufficiently imposing to overawe all opposition. A political partnership of fourteen years seemed to point to Prussia as her natural ally, but Catherine resolved nevertheless to

throw over her old confederate, and take up with Austria instead. Her unerring political sagacity told her that the Prussian alliance was played out. Frederick II. was opposed to every political scheme which would strengthen Russia at the expense of Turkey. Austria, on the other hand, was as much, and even more, interested than Russia in the partition of the Ottoman Empire, and in such a matter-of-fact statesman with a keen eye to the main chance as the Emperor Joseph, Catherine found an ally ready to her hand. It would be a great mistake, indeed, to assume from the effusive tone of Joseph's correspondence with his "Empress and heroine," that he had any real affection or even esteem for her. His confidential correspondence with his brother Leopold sufficiently proves that he regarded the "Catherinised Princess of Zerbst" as a shrewd and shifty adventuress at best. Even after his celebrated first interview with her at Mohilev, when he joined the brilliant retinue of princes and paladins who had come together from all parts of Europe to see cities spring up like mushrooms in a single night on the desolate steppes of the Ukraine beneath the enchanter Potemkin's magic wand, even then his cool head and cold heart had resisted the glamour of the wily siren. But he had been much impressed by her practical genius, and had returned to Vienna intimately persuaded that Catherine II. was a far more desirable confederate than Frederick II., and finally the courts of St. Petersburg and Vienna entered into a secret compact to partition Turkey, Austria stipulating for the larger portion of Servia and Bosnia, including Belgrade, all Venice's Dalmatian possessions and the fortress of Khotin; Russia professing to be satisfied with the fortress of Ochakov, the district between the Bug and the Dniester, and one or two islands in the Ægean. An independent principality under the suzerainty of Russia was to be erected out of Moldavia,

Wallachia and Bessarabia. The first step was taken when, on December 14, 1782, an imperial rescript ordered the annexation of the Crimea, and on April 8, 1783, the peninsula was occupied by Potemkin, who was forthwith appointed its first Governor-General, with the title of Prince of Tauris. This wanton violation of the Treaty of Kainardschi sent a tremor of indignation through the whole Turkish Empire. The Janissaries besieged the palace and loudly demanded to be led against the Muscovite. The Ulemas urged the Caliph to unfurl the green banner of the Prophet and declare a war of extermination against the Giaours, and the French, Prussian, and Swedish envoys at Constantinople secretly encouraged these warlike demonstrations. Meanwhile a large Russian army assembled in the Ukraine, and the Emperor informed the French court that he intended to assist the Tsarina with 120,000 men. A general European war therefore seemed inevitable.

This, then, was the time chosen by Gustavus III. to fall upon Denmark, and a more favourable opportunity could hardly be expected. But an apparently insurmountable obstacle stood in the way. By the Constitution of 1772 the King had solemnly pledged himself never to commence a war without the consent of the Estates unless he were himself attacked. It was absolutely necessary, therefore, that Denmark should fire the first shot, and he meant to force her to do so by an expedient as simple as it was impudent. The Swedish Minister at Copenhagen was to deliver a note to the Danish Government demanding the instant abolition of the Elsinore tolls, while a Swedish frigate was to simultaneously pass through the Sound without saluting the Danish flag. A broadside from the Danish admiral was the only conceivable reply to such a wanton insult, and thus, technically, Denmark would be the aggressor, and Gustavus might fly to arms without sum-

moning the Riksdag or breaking the letter of the Constitution. The rest had been arranged beforehand. A Swedish fleet was forthwith to blockade Copenhagen, and while the King invaded Zealand with 8000 men, Toll, at the head of 15,000 more, was to cross the Norwegian frontier. Only four persons besides the King were admitted into the secret. Chancellor Creutz was intrusted with the diplomatic part of the business, Trolle was responsible for the fleet, Toll for the army. The new Secretary of State, Johan Gustaf von Carlson, was also an accomplice, but his duties were purely clerical. Gustavus was impatient to begin at once, but Trolle pleaded hard for a brief postponement till some more of his frigates were off the stocks, and the arguments and statistics of the great specialist were too cogent to be refuted; so the King was reluctantly compelled to postpone the whole enterprise till after his return from Finland, whither he was going to sound the Tsarina and see how far he himself might venture to go. The interview between the two Northern sovereigns was delayed by Gustavus fracturing his left arm by falling from his horse at a review at Paromalen, but on the 27th June 1783 he had sufficiently recovered to meet Catherine at Fredrikshamn, where she was already awaiting him, and there they spent three days together. Catherine was as sparkling and as sprightly as ever, and went out of her way to be agreeable; but the Fredrikshamn visit, like the St. Petersburg visit five years before, had no political results. Gustavus, however, affected to be highly satisfied. "The Russians," wrote he to Trolle, "await every hour the tidings of the occupation of the Crimea by Potemkin. I had it from the Empress's own lips. If the Turks stand that, there will be no war. It would be just as if Denmark were to cede the Sound tolls and not fire upon the frigate—a miracle, in fact. Our enterprise need only wait till the news of the occupation of the Crimea, which

may be expected in the first days of August or the last of July." But July and August came and went, and still there was no sign of a rupture between the Tsarina and the Porte. The dark and stormy days of October were approaching. Trolle was growing restive. His remonstrances became warnings. He doubted now whether the enterprise were practicable at all this year. At last the King himself began to waver, and at a conference held secretly at Mälby, Carlson's country-house, "for fear of the Jews,"¹ it was resolved to postpone operations till the following year, but Toll and Trolle were in the meantime to work away steadily at the necessary armaments. This, however, could not be done without money, and no money was forthcoming. Liljencrantz was then sent for, and the King requested him to devise some expedient for raising £124,000 to place the national defences on a war footing. The economical Finance Minister, now consulted for the first time on the matter, and purposely kept in the dark as to the real destination of this relatively large amount, offered many well-founded objections; but at last he consented to raise £8000 of the amount in Sweden itself on his personal guarantee, and, in the following spring, the adroit financier, with the assistance of the French Government, actually succeeded in raising the remainder in Holland on singularly advantageous terms for Sweden; but it was rightly regarded as a great financial feat, which none but Liljencrantz could have accomplished. Meanwhile the King had quitted Sweden, ostensibly to visit the baths of Pisa, but really to make a political tour, and knit together again the severed threads of Sweden's alliances with the Western Powers. The Constitution of 1772 provided that the Senate, during the King's absence, should exercise the supreme authority; but Gustavus took good care to leave

¹ Gustavus III. to Creutz.

it a mere dummy. The real Government of the country was intrusted to a secret Council of Four, the so-called "Board of National Defence," consisting of Creutz, Trolle, Toll, and Carlson. This extraordinary commission, however, was not mentioned by name in any of the numerous public documents the King left behind him; the Senate was taught to regard it as a mere sub-section of the Ministry of Finance, while the general public was ignorant of its official existence altogether.

Nothing now delayed the King's departure, and in September 1783 he quitted Sweden for the Continent, travelling under his favourite *sobriquet* of the Count of Haga. He had selected his travelling companions with great care and a fine eye to effect. They were all of them picked men, finished specimens of the exquisite eighteenth century *bon-ton*, cavaliers fit to adorn the most witty and the most splendid of *salons*. It would have been difficult for any other European potentate to have got together such a constellation of grace and talent. Among that chosen twelve were to be seen the eminent poet, orator, and antiquary, Adlerbeth, to-day the King's admiring friend, to-morrow his conscientious foe;¹ there was Sergel,² to this day Sweden's greatest sculptor; the energetic and indefatigable young diplomatist Franc; the graceful and winning Carl Peyron; the discreet and observant Evert Taube, in later days the King's most trusted political confidant and secret agent; to say nothing of such Olympian shapes as Hans Henrik von Essen, Hans Axel von Fersen,² and the famous Maurice Armfelt, the "Alcibiades of the North." The last two young men play such an important

¹ It was the humiliation of his order in 1789 which wrought this change. Adlerbeth's *Anteckningar* are amongst our most valuable contemporary documents, though class bias makes him an unjustly severe judge of his former friend.

² Fersen joined the King in Germany; Sergel at Verona.

part in Swedish history that they deserve to be somewhat more fully described.

Hans Axel von Fersen, the eldest son of Gustavus' lifelong antagonist, Count Axel Frederick, whose romantic career and ghastly fate make him one of the most interesting and pathetic figures in modern history, had inherited all the virtues, many of the talents, and few of the vices of his illustrious father. He had, even as a young man, a certain haughty, grandiose manner which repelled intimacy; but his friends pronounced him to be the beau-ideal of a *preux chevalier*. The name of *le beau Fersen*, for so he was called at Versailles, must ever be associated with the name of Marie Antoinette, and we shall see, in the course of this history, how the same chivalrous regard for her honour,¹ which tore him from her side in the heyday of her short-lived splendour, became, in the darkest hour of her adversity, a devotion which dared everything on her behalf. Young Fersen's personal loyalty to Gustavus III. was to be severely shaken by the revolution of 1789, but his devotion to the dynasty was unalterable, and, it is melancholy to add, cost him his life. By his refusal—it was almost solitary—to recognise the deposition of Gustavus IV., he incurred the implacable hatred of the former Duke of Sudermania, then Charles XIII., and it is the blackest of the many blots on that miserable monarch's memory that he permitted the most faithful adherent of his own brother and nephew to be worried to death in the streets of Stockholm by an infuriated crowd.

Gustavus Armfelt was the eldest son of a poor Finnish nobleman, and born on March 31, 1757. His precocity was astonishing. Even as a child he was remarkable for

¹ He quitted Versailles for America on the outbreak of the war, when he perceived that the Queen had fallen in love with him, sacrificing his prospects to save her from scandal.

his swift comprehension, retentive memory, and exuberant imagination. Morally he was a singular mixture of selfishness and affection. From an angelic mother, whom he adored, he inherited a tender heart and an overflowing sensibility, while to his father he owed his passionate, masterful temper¹ and his headstrong self-will, his susceptibility towards the fair sex, and a valour which bordered upon foolhardiness. After a desultory, haphazard sort of education at home, he was sent to the University of Åbo, where he did little more than idle away his time. There the stalwart, handsome stripling attracted the attention of old General Ehrensward at a review, which led to his being sent as a cadet to Carlscrona, and ultimately, through the influence of Göran Sprengtporten, an old comrade of his father's, he obtained an ensign's commission in the Guards at Stockholm. The King, as Colonel, frequently came into contact with the young ensign; but Gustavus's first impressions of his future favourite were distinctly unfavourable. Nor can we wonder at it, for Armfelt himself candidly admits that, at this time, he was an insolent scapegrace, who respected nobody and nothing in his audacious frolics. A discreditable duel into which he had

¹ Armfelt relates the following anecdote about his violent temper: "One day my father reproached me for my idleness and general misconduct. I answered him defiantly, and he, being an extremely irritable man, caught up a chair and aimed a frenzied blow at my head. I parried the blow and tried to wrench the chair from his grasp, but he was stronger than I, and thrust me back with such violence that my face was severely bruised. Mad with rage, I rushed up into my room, took down one of my loaded pistols, and turned to meet my father, who was close upon my heels. He stopped short when he saw me ready to fire, and cried, 'Give me the other pistol, or it will be murder.' Quick as lightning I obeyed, and, as soon as he had the weapon in his hand, he exclaimed, 'The first shot is yours, so fire!' I was so struck by his coolness, and at the same time so overwhelmed at the thought of a duel with my own father, that I threw away the pistol, fell at my father's feet and begged his forgiveness. He tenderly lifted me up, forgave me, and said, 'Take heed to yourself, my son; a single moment like this may cost you the repose of a lifetime.'"—*O. Tegner, "G. M. Armfelt."*

drawn a brother officer brought him completely into disgrace, and he would have been degraded into a line regiment if he had not asked for a two years' furlough, which he spent in travelling all over Europe. At Spa, in 1780, he again fell in with his royal master. Two years' foreign travel had by this time licked the young cub into shape, and the change did not escape the penetrating eye of the monarch. He felt that such an engaging, graceful young officer, as strong as Hercules and as beautiful as Apollo, would prove an acquisition to any court: so he attached him to the person of the little Crown Prince, and in 1782 chose him as one of his travelling companions.

The first adventure of the Count of Haga and his suite happened near a little place called Bistow, two miles from Warnemunde; but let Gustavus tell it in his own words: "We had intended to sleep at Gustrow, but the evil genius which presides over the vile roads of Germany decreed otherwise, and night overtook us at . . . Bistow. . . . We were forced to look about for shelter, and at last came upon a sort of hovel, where some peasants, an old soldier eating potatoes, and a sick woman just delivered, were crowded into the same room. Imagine the state of the atmosphere! I really couldn't stand it, so returned to my carriage, intending to pass the night there, when a boy came and told me there was a church in the place. I naturally concluded there must be a parsonage also, and sent my page Robert to beg hospitality for two Swedish noblemen who were returning from the French wars. My petition was instantly granted. Picture to yourself the ideal of peaceful prosperity and sincere good-nature, and you will have before your eyes the pastor and his wife. She spoke a little French. They offered me a double-bedded room. Their family consisted of two boys and a girl, who came in and presented us with some fruit. The

lad is about my son's age . . . and is also called Gustavus ! Judge of my emotion on hearing that dear name ! I had my mattresses and bedclothes unpacked and brought up, when my gold galooned damask curtains gave the good people a high opinion of their guests ; but they had not the least idea who we were, and were much too well-bred to ask. While they were preparing our rooms for us, we conversed as best we could with the pastor. As soon as he knew we were Swedes, he began talking of the meeting at Fredrikshamn, and it was the general belief that Sweden would exchange Pomerania for Russian Finland. You can imagine how much the conversation diverted me . . . !”

At Nurnberg the Duke of Brunswick surprised the travellers at the crowded inn, and carried them off to Quedlinburg. Gustavus does not give us his impressions of this very much overrated warrior, but Armfelt thought his manners affected and his politeness excessive. At Hatzfeld the King had to sleep in a wretched outhouse, Peyron on a billiard-table, and the rest of his suite on the bare ground. Verona, where the King was regaled by a wild-beast show and fight in the colossal amphitheatre, was reached on October 29, and on November 2 he arrived at Pisa. Here Gustavus lingered for a fortnight for the sake of the baths, a fortnight which his suite found insupportably wearisome. The cold was so intense that the Northerners almost froze in their rooms. The severe weather pursued them to Florence also, Gustavus humorously informing Creutz that winter had had the incivility to become his travelling companion uninvited. At Florence they stayed a month and saw everything, the Ducal picture gallery, however, being the King's favourite resort. The exclusiveness of the Swedes made them very unpopular. They seldom or never appeared in Italian society, and the haughtiness of Armfelt and Fersen in particular made a

very bad impression. Satirical squibs began to circulate about the Count of Haga and his suite, such, for instance, as those famous couplets about—

“ Il Conte di Haga
Chi molto vide
E poco paga.”

The good Florentines were not to know that the King's means were very limited, and that most of his money had already been expended in costly presents. Armfelt's description of Florentine society, moreover, is scarcely stimulating. “If jewels and well-dressed women,” says he, “could make society agreeable, we should have had nothing to desire; but except when I was actually eating, it was as much as I could do to keep my eyes open.”

The only thing which still detained Gustavus at Florence was his anxiety to make the acquaintance of a brother potentate, whom all Europe regarded with perplexed admiration. This was the Emperor Joseph II., who, if not a great, was certainly an extraordinary man. An autocrat whose passion for reform outdid the zeal of a modern Radical; a Hapsburg who detested ceremony and disdained luxury; a Catholic who abolished monasteries and snubbed the Pope—such a man was rightly regarded as a prodigy among princes. He also was now on his travels, under the title of the Count of Falkenstein, and on December 19, accompanied by his brother Leopold, he surprised Gustavus *en déshabillé* one morning; almost forced his way into the King's bedchamber, and remained with him alone an hour. The austere simplicity of the Emperor astonished and amused the Swedes. To them he seemed too natural. They put it down to affectation. They describe him as a lively little beperiwigged gentleman of simple manners and fluent discourse, very fond of hearing his own voice, and constantly looking round for applause. The two

monarchs took away very different impressions of each other. The naturally good-natured Gustavus was disposed to take Joseph at his best, and admire him in a vague, wondering sort of way, as a new and very curious kind of animal. Joseph, naturally envious¹ of any talent which threatened in any way to obscure his own, had no very keen eye for Gustavus's merits, and a very lively sense of his foibles. In his private correspondence he invariably describes his Northern rival as a conceited fop, an impudent braggart, who tries to conceal his imbecility and ignorance beneath a veneer of politeness and an affectation of wit and humour.²

On December 22, Gustavus quitted Florence for Rome, but, the day before he left, he paid a farewell visit to a fallen celebrity, whose strange and melancholy history could not but appeal to his compassion and his imagination. This was no other than Prince Charles Edward Stuart, then residing at Florence under the title of Count of Albany. It is said that when the King of Sweden first saw this unfortunate Pretender, he could not restrain his tears. The whilom bonnie Prince Charlie was now, in his old age, a broken-down, political outcast, deserted by his wife and neglected by his kinsfolk. On the other hand, the Count of Albany does not seem to have been altogether the besotted satyr that the world has been taught to consider him. This calumnious legend can be traced to Alfieri, who, as the paramour of Albany's adulterous wife, had every reason to blacken the memory of

¹ This I know is not the generally received estimate of Joseph's character. See, however, the memoirs or *Anteckningar* of Lars von Engeström, who, as Swedish Minister at Vienna, had exceptional advantages for studying Joseph at all times. Envy, he tells us, was the principal trait of his character, and his anecdotes in support of his statement are certainly most cogent. Compare also Widrinsky, *Joseph II.*, who relates many instances of his hero's jealousy of his contemporaries.

² Arndt, *Joseph II. und Leopold von Toscana ihr Briefwechsel*, vol. i.

the injured husband. Gustavus III. and Armfelt, both of them shrewd and independent observers, have a different tale to tell. The former told Marie Antoinette in 1784 that he found the Count perfectly sober and sensible (and he visited him frequently), though apt to wax warm at times over his wrongs; while Armfelt¹ informs us that the "old fellow" was full of romantic sentiments, and had a dignified grace about him worthy of his rank and race. "His house," he continues, "is handsomely furnished, and when it comes to a good dinner, I certainly would prefer his table to that of the King of Sweden." Gustavus treated the unfortunate Prince like a brother monarch, and settled a small pension of £500 a year upon him out of his private purse.

It was on Christmas Eve, 1783, that the Count of Haga reached the Eternal City. "Here I am at last," wrote he to Creutz, "at the capital of the ancient world, the city of Augustus, Trajan, and the Antonines, the birthplace of so many great men, which offers such a varied spectacle to the philosopher, the statesman, and the man of letters. . . . But the strangest spectacle of all was to be seen yesterday at High Mass in St. Peter's, when an Emperor of the ultra-Catholic House of Hapsburg . . . knelt before the high altar, side by side with the head of the Lutheran religion." The conduct of the Emperor Joseph indeed filled every one who knew him with astonishment. The man who had almost insulted the Pope a few years before, who had despoiled the Roman Church in his domains and ignored her dogmas, now treated the Holy Father with the deepest reverence; exhausted himself with religious exercises; chose for his confessor the most fanatical monk in Rome, and spent whole nights in prayer at the tombs of saints and

¹ Armfelt's father, by the way, had followed Prince Charlie from Prestonpans to Culloden.

martyrs. All this Gustavus regarded as simple diplomacy. "Both of us," wrote he to Schröderheim, "were to be seen side by side on our knees before St. Peter's altar, and all the world has been laying wagers ever since as to which of the twain is the more Catholic. Well, as to that, I believe we are both about equally Catholic, but I am quite sure that I am the more apostolic, for I believe in the tenets of the Council of Upsala, while he believes in nothing at all."

With the Pope the relations of the King of Sweden were very cordial. The gentle and noble character of "the Great Persuader," as his admirers called Pius VI., attracted Gustavus III. from the very first. Two days after their arrival at Rome, the Count of Haga and his suite were presented to the Pope in the Swedish national costume. Armfelt thus describes the interview: "We formed a circle round the Holy Father, who spoke somewhat incorrect French with great ease and fluency. His manner, without being at all imposing, was, nevertheless, indescribably noble. . . . We were with him about half an hour, and it was Senator Sparre who murdered the King's French on our behalf. On taking leave, the Pope himself conducted us to the door. In fine, he had the air of *un tres grand seigneur*, and there was certainly nothing of the monk about him."

On New Year's Day the Pope conducted the Swedes over the Vatican Library, and was accessible every day to the King of Sweden, with whom he had frequent and most cordial colloquies. He learned with extreme pleasure that Gustavus had granted liberty of worship to his Catholic subjects, and gladly sent a Vicar Apostolic to consecrate a Catholic church which Gustavus had had built at Stockholm. In return, the Pope permitted the King of Sweden to restore and refurnish the dilapidated Lutheran Church at

Rome, and there, on Easter Sunday, 1784, Gustavus communicated, Bishop Taube coming all the way from Stockholm for the express purpose. In fact, the stalwart Protestantism of the North was somewhat alarmed by the intimacy between the Pope and the King, and it was even rumoured that Gustavus was a crypto-Catholic, and that Bishop Taube returned with a new semi-Romish liturgy to Sweden.

At the house of the French ambassador at Rome, Cardinal Berni, Gustavus was also an honoured guest; while in Berni's conversation, Gustavus tells us, he found a healing balsam which more than compensated him for the dulness of the Roman conversaziones. The bad weather, which now began to set in, however, drove the Count of Haga and his suite farther south, and early in 1784 they set out for Naples, which the easily effervescent Armfelt compared to an earthly paradise after the dulness of Rome. At first, indeed, a smart tiff between the Count of Haga and the Queen of Naples, on a point of etiquette, threatened to bring the visit to an untimely and disagreeable end; but the difference was happily patched up before it had assumed the dimensions of a quarrel, and the felicity of the visitors, during the remainder of their stay, was almost ideally perfect. Those were Queen Caroline's early and innocent days. As yet there was not a shadow of a suspicion of those crimes and cruelties which were to cover her memory with infamy and revolt the most long-suffering of peoples. The royal couple lived together happily and ruled prosperously, and the picture which Gustavus has left us of them at this time is decidedly flattering. "I am charmed with the Queen of Naples," he writes to Creutz, ". . . she grows upon one. Nobody could be more attentive or obliging. She has nothing, indeed, of the grand and gracious manner of the Empress [Catherine], nothing, I mean, of that courteous vivacity which flatters at

the same time that it transports you ; but her charming *bonhomie*, if it does not inspire respect, certainly takes your heart by storm. . . . As for the King, you can see at a glance that he is a Bourbon. He has all their good and all their bad qualities. A better education and a few reverses would have been the making of him. . . . Unfortunately, he is a slave to pleasure, and cursed with an invincible distrust of himself and others." The visit of the Swedes was a continuous festival, and when the Carnival began, all conventionality was thrown aside, and the fun was of the most fast and furious description. The King of the Two Sicilies and the monarch from Ultima Thule pelted one another with comfits in the Strada di Toledo like a couple of schoolboys ; the Queen, attired as Ceres, and escorted by a group of Neapolitan peasant-women, crowned the Count of Haga with roses on Shrove Tuesday, while the two Kings and Armfelt got up a masque of bears and Laplanders, which nearly frightened the ladies out of their senses. Then there were reviews of the magnificent but not very martial Liparotic Guard ; picnics among the groves and cascades of Caserta, where Armfelt flirted platonically with the Queen ; and excursions to the crater of Vesuvius and the ruins of Pompeii and Paestum.

It was with unfeigned regret that Gustavus quitted his Neapolitan friends, and returned to Rome, whose sombre grandeur, after the joyous revelry of the sunny South, chilled and depressed the younger members of his suite. The King alone seemed perfectly contented, and continued his artistic and archæological pursuits with unabated vigour. Week after week passed away, and still he lingered in the Eternal City. Pius VI., too, redoubled his attentions. On the occasion of Gustavus's visit to the College of the Propaganda, a eulogium in verse in forty-four languages

was presented to him in a precious casket, and, on the eve of his departure, the cupola of St. Peter's was splendidly illuminated in his honour.

The King quitted Rome deeply occupied by grave political cares. Throughout his travels, indeed, he had never once neglected affairs, and followed the course of foreign and domestic politics with sleepless vigilance. Every mail brought him voluminous reports from all his Ministers, and the bulk of his correspondence was devoted to affairs of State. He also carefully studied the industrial, economic, and military systems of the countries through which he passed. Thus, in a letter to Trolle, to take only a single instance, he thus alludes to the reconstruction of the Neapolitan fleet by the Queen's favourite, the energetic Acton: "I have met at Naples a man who has made it his business to provide this country with a navy. To my great satisfaction, I find that for three times as much money as I have expended upon my own fleet, the King of Naples only gets seven 70-gun liners and ten frigates. This little fact has certainly not diminished the very high opinion I already had of my Admiral-General's work."¹ This flattering letter never reached Trolle, who died suddenly in Stockholm in March 1784, to the unfeigned regret of his royal master. "I know not," he exclaimed, "which loses the most by it, the State or myself."

Trolle's last act had been to suspend those warlike preparations with which he had been occupied for the last twelve months. The state of Europe was no longer propitious to Gustavus's aggressive plans. The Russo-Turkish war, which all the diplomatists of Europe had confidently predicted, had not come to pass after all. The Porte had actually acquiesced in the spoliation of the Crimea, and Austria

¹ With one-third of the money Trolle had turned out fourteen liners and thirteen frigates.

and Russia forthwith disarmed. Peace was re-established. Simultaneously came the news that a palace revolution at Copenhagen had put an end to "the administration of old women and young parsons," as Gustavus called it, and Anders Bernstorff, the one Danish Minister whom Sweden had cause to fear, was placed at the head of a stable administration. Thus, for the third time in eleven years, Denmark had escaped from the clutches of the Swedish King, who forthwith addressed a caressing letter to the Tsarina. His plans for the future were largely based upon the prospect of her friendship, and he still believed in the possibility of a Russo-Swedish alliance. But Catherine's reply, which reached him at Venice, tore the veil from his eyes. Indeed, it was a pretty plain intimation that she would stand no nonsense from her good brother and cousin. "The world says," she remarked, "that your Majesty is secretly preparing to conquer Norway. I don't believe a word of it, nor do I attach much importance to another rumour, which threatens me with an invasion of Finland. . . . My only answer to all such idle chatter is to bluntly assure every one who will take the trouble to listen to me, that neither of these projects will come to anything." The significance of these words was unmistakable. Russia was henceforth to be reckoned with as a foe. But the shock, though severe, was by no means overwhelming. Gustavus was much too cautious a politician to carry all his eggs in one basket. His resolution was instantly taken. If Russia were impossible, he must fall back upon France. It is true that he executed this political *volte face* with extreme repugnance. The feeble, vacillating, non-descript government of Louis XVI. was a poor substitute for the vigorous and ever-victorious Catherine. But if Sweden were to play a leading part in European politics, she couldn't stand alone, and even the French alliance was

better than none at all ; and Cardinal Berni, in obedience to secret orders from Versailles, pressed the Swedish monarch to visit Paris as soon as possible, and held out the most golden promises. The sudden solicitude of France for Sweden, on the other hand, is easily explicable. All Europe had interpreted the Fredrikshamn meeting as a *rapprochement* between Russia and Sweden, and the court of Louis XVI. had been greatly disturbed thereby. France saw herself threatened with the loss of her last ally, and spared no pains to bring Sweden back to her traditional policy ; and, after some weeks of intense anxiety, her efforts were rewarded. On June 7, 1784, the Count of Haga suddenly arrived at Paris.

The ovation which awaited Gustavus at Paris showed that there, at any rate, he was still regarded as one of the most remarkable personages in Europe. His popularity was universal and extraordinary. All classes of the population vied with each other to do him honour. The philosophers hailed him as the one man capable of realising the dreams of the new era. The people looked up to him as the Commons' King. To avoid being mobbed by his admirers in the street, he had to drive about in a modest little chaise, dressed in a plain grey surtout, and attended by a single gentleman. His appearance at the theatre was the signal for the most enthusiastic demonstrations. If, as was generally the case, he arrived in the middle of the play, the audience always insisted upon the piece being recommenced, and everything which could possibly be construed into an allusion to his past exploits was instantly and rapturously applauded. The Royal Academy of Music regaled him with ten new operas, and the advocates in the courts of justice interrupted their pleadings to eulogise his virtues and his talents. When he went to the Académie Française to witness the reception of the Marquis de

Montesquieu, two hundred ladies of the highest rank were there to meet him, and the Director-General Suard addressed him in a panegyric which was a miracle of adroitness and originality. All the Academicians were then presented to the Count of Haga, and the acute and flattering remarks which he addressed on this occasion to each of the forty in turn on the merits of his particular work, revealed an intimate knowledge of current French literature, which filled every one present with astonishment.¹ Gustavus, then, had every reason to be satisfied with his reception. "I feel quite at home here," he wrote to Creutz; "the royal family," he added subsequently, "has treated me with every imaginable mark of affection and regard." In truth, the French court had determined to treat their guest with the most profuse and splendid hospitality. The fêtes and entertainments in his honour were many and magnificent, but we can only glance at a few of them in passing. At a garden-party at the Petit Trianon, where a new comic opera, "*Le Dormeur Eveillé*," by Marmontel and Piccini, was performed, Taube, Fersen, and Armfelt sat in the royal box beside the Queen, while the two Kings stood behind and conversed with the maids of honour. Supper was served at three tables in the Orchard Pavilion. The Queen, instead of heading the table, walked round among her Swedish guests, leaned over their chairs, and chatted familiarly with each of them. After dinner the gardens were brilliantly illuminated, and all the ladies of the court, dressed in white, promenaded with their cavaliers in court dresses. Gustavus imagined himself in the Elysian Fields, and Armfelt thought it "divine." But a most tragical occurrence suddenly cast a gloom over these festivities, and made the gay French capital insupportably odious to the Count of Haga.

¹ Grimm, *Correspondance Littéraire*, part iii. vol. 2. Feuillet de Conches, *Louis XVI.*, pp. 434-452.

Among Gustavus's suite was a young officer named Peyron, who had grown up under his eye, and for whom he had a great affection. At the commencement of the American war, he, then a lieutenant in the French regiment *Royal Suedois*, had volunteered to serve under the French flag against the English, but just as he was about to embark at Brest, he quarrelled with his colonel, the Count de la Marcke, threw up his commission in a fit of pique, and the regiment sailed without him. De la Marcke had now returned from America, but he had neither forgotten nor forgiven Peyron, and the young Swede had been privately warned by a mutual friend not to come to Paris. Unfortunately, private reasons forced him to go there. A young English girl to whom he had been clandestinely married, and who had recently borne him a son, was on her way to meet him, in order to throw herself at the feet of the King of Sweden, and implore his mediation with her parents, who regarded the marriage as a *mésalliance* on her part. So to Paris Peyron came, and, in a spirit of idiotic bravado, called at the house of his former colonel, and was naturally shown the door with but scant ceremony, the lacquey going so far as to inform Peyron that the Count could hold no communication with a poltroon. Peyron swore to be avenged, but Gustavus, horrified at the idea of a collision between his favourite page and the son of his oldest friend, kept the young man constantly by his side, and carefully avoided every place frequented by the De la Marckes. For a time his efforts were successful; but at last, at a court ball, Peyron succeeded in eluding the King's vigilance, and rushing off to a buffet where De la Marcke was standing with a party of officers, grossly insulted him there and then. The inevitable duel, which took place next morning in the Bois de Boulogne, was over in a few seconds. At the first onset Peyron ran

his antagonist clean through the body, but at the same instant fell back dead in his second's arms, pierced through the left eye by the Count's rapier. The affair was hushed up by order of the French Government. Peyron was buried privately, and De la Marcke ultimately recovered, but Gustavus was for a long time inconsolable. Nevertheless, from a political point of view, he had no reason to regret his visit to Paris. By two secret conventions, signed at Versailles on the 1st and 17th of July, France ceded the island of St. Bartholomew to Sweden, and undertook to pay Gustavus an annual subsidy of 1,200,000 livres for the next six years, over and above the ordinary subsidies provided for by the renewed Convention of 1783. It was further provided that, in case Sweden were attacked, France should assist her, on demand, with a fleet of twelve liners and six frigates and 12,000 troops, or find an equivalent in money, Sweden, on her part, engaging to hold a fleet of twelve liners at the disposal of her ally in case of war.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MUTINOUS RIKSDAG OF 1786.

The elections go against the Court—The leaders of the Opposition—Fersen—Celsius—Herweghr—Engeström—Causes of the discontent—Love of change—Brandy monopoly—Ecclesiastical maladministration—Grievances of the Nobility—Fersen and the King—The speech from the throne—Report of the Government to the Estates—The Church—The Law—Trade and commerce—The Navy—The Army—Arts and Sciences—Important concessions obtained from the King by the Nobles—Rejection by the Riksdag of all the royal propositions or Bills but one—Dissolution of the Riksdag—Speech from the throne—Gustavus appeals to posterity—His grief at losing the confidence of his people.

GUSTAVUS used to date all his misfortunes from the Riksdag of 1786, that mutinous and ungrateful Diet whose whole history is still so obscure and enigmatical. It was very reluctantly and against his better judgment that the King was persuaded to summon the Estates. But his two ablest counsellors, the discreet and cautious Liljencrantz and the astute and audacious Toll, men who never made mistakes, and agreed in nothing except an invincible distrust of representative assemblies in general, now united in assuring their master that a Riksdag was necessary, and he yielded. Liljencrantz required the assistance of the Estates to equilibrate the finances, and Toll's scheme of military organisation was at a standstill for want of funds. Both counsellors confidently predicted success, and Toll characteristically undertook to put a bit in the mouth of the most refractory Diet.

The result of the elections (which were perfectly free) showed, however, how utterly the King's counsellors had mistaken the temper of the nation. All over the country the choice of the electors fell either upon notorious malcontents or upon untried men who were thought likely to go with the tide of public opinion, and it was soon evident that that tide was running violently against the Government. Scores of agitators, sprung from no one knew whence, everywhere did their best to alarm and irritate the deputies on their way to town. The most absurd and scandalous reports about the King's designs were industriously circulated and greedily devoured. Fersen was the natural leader of the opposition, and the extraordinary popularity of the great party chief during this short-lived Riksdag was almost as ominous a sign of the times as the sudden reappearance of General Pechlin among his fellow-peers. Next to Fersen, the most conspicuous among the King's adversaries were the Bishops of Lund and Carlstad among the clergy, and Johan von Engeström among the nobility.

Olaf Celsius, Bishop of Lund, was a man of many talents, a sound scholar, a good if not a great preacher, an excellent historian, and one of the most energetic and conscientious prelates of his day. On founding the Swedish Academy, Gustavus named Celsius one of its eighteen members, and to the same discriminating patron he also owed his episcopal throne. He was therefore bound to his sovereign by ties of gratitude as well as by ties of loyalty. But he was, above all things, an honest and God-fearing man, and the present scandalous ecclesiastical administration of the country (of which more anon) filled him with a righteous indignation, which expressed itself in a most determined opposition to the court.

Daniel Herweghr, Bishop of Carlstad, though not so

remarkable a man as Celsius, possessed, nevertheless, very respectable abilities. As a preacher he was highly esteemed, and he was certainly the best philologist on the episcopal bench. He, too, was a Gustavan bishop, but, like his brother of Lund, his anxiety for the honour and safety of the Church had temporarily alienated him from the King.

Johan von Engeström, the soul of the aristocratic opposition during the present Riksdag, was until quite recently one of the most obscure personages in Swedish history; but for his mysterious connection with the assassination of Gustavus III., it is doubtful whether the world would ever have heard of him at all. But his quite recently published *Anteckningar* or Memoirs, which tell us so much about the parliamentary history of the period, tell us indirectly still more about himself. Engeström seems to have been one of those men who unite extraordinary resolution and energy with perfect honesty and very commonplace abilities, men whose narrow minds are completely dominated by a single fixed idea which it is their burning ambition to realise at all hazards. He seems also to have fallen under the influence of the French philosophers, and certainly accepted *sans phrase* all their dogmas about the age of reason and the rights of man. This Northern Jacobin regarded, of course, the salutary revolution of 1772 as an abominable crime, and consequently hated Gustavus with the concentrated, irreconcilable hatred of the true fanatic. Naturally well-meaning and transparently honest, he was compelled by adverse circumstances to work by crooked, underhand methods, and his vindictiveness finally involved him in the most stupid and dastardly of crimes.

The Opposition was quite in the dark as to the King's plans, and had no plans of their own. Celsius, indeed, at a preliminary meeting of the clerical deputies, counselled his colleagues to oppose all the royal propositions, which were

bound to be mischievous, he opined, because they were kept so secret. Engeström, extreme as usual, insisted that the time had now come to bring the King to book for his maladministration; but Fersen deprecated anything like rashness or violence, and his word was law to the Opposition.

Many and various were the causes of this reaction against the most amiable of monarchs. First, there was that love of change inherent in human nature. The Gustavian system had now lasted fourteen years, and fourteen years is a long life for any political system which rests on a popular basis. The Government, on the whole, had been wise and strong; its worst errors were trivial indeed compared with the anarchy which it had supplanted; but of course it could not satisfy every one, and the longer it lasted, the more delusions it destroyed and the more expectations it disappointed. The enthusiasts of 1772 were the malcontents of 1786.

Then there were those natural calamities which no Government can prevent or foresee, but which are always put down against the Government of the day. Trade, owing to the unsettled state of European politics, was very dull just then, and a succession of phenomenally bad harvests had spread desolation from one corner of the realm to the other.

Then again the Government had made one most serious blunder, and had thereby severely shaken the proverbial loyalty of the largest section of the population, the peasantry, who could not forgive it for depriving them of the time-honoured privilege of domestic distillation. It would have been well if Gustavus had borne in mind the shrewd advice given him by Bishop Serenius fifteen years before: "You may do what you like with the Swedish people, if you only keep your hands off their

brandy." He had taken their brandy from them, and all that he had given them in return could not win back their hearts.

Much more respectable were the grievances of the Estate of Clergy.

The condition of the Church of Sweden at that time was such as to fill every devout Christian with alarm, and every honest man with indignation. Sweden had always been a religious country. The temper of the people was serious and devout, and the clergy, generally speaking, did their duty and were much beloved. The court, too, had for generations given the most edifying example to the nation. Under Gustavus III. matters had been different. The King, indeed, was anything but irreligious. He was a pretty regular churchgoer, frequently communicated, fasted on Good Friday, and took quite an extraordinary interest in ritual. But for his early Voltairean training, he might perhaps, like his ancestress Christina, have seceded to Rome; and, as it was, his conceptions of sacramental grace, his strong preference for prelacy, and his fondness for gorgeous vestments and ceremonials, made the more puritanical of his own clergy suspect him of being a crypto-Catholic. But religion had, after all, but little hold upon him; his conduct as head of the Church during the first fourteen years of his reign was criminally lax and careless, and it was of itself a scandal to appoint as his vicar-general the facile and easy-going Schröderheim, whose religious opinions were even hazier than those of his royal master. Under Schröderheim's happy-go-lucky administration, the sale of church preferment became one of the court's chief sources of revenue. Schröderheim himself was neither greedy nor mercenary, and, with exceptional opportunities of growing rich, he lived and died a poor man; but it was the peculiar weakness of the good-

natured Minister that he could never say "No" to anybody, and perceiving that he was expected to find money for the pleasures of the court, he was not very particular where he took it from. He turned many a penny by the judicious distribution of Church preferment, and the patronage of the richest country cures and the fattest cathedral stalls were sold to the highest bidder or bestowed upon needy courtiers. A single instance will illustrate the lengths to which this abuse was carried on. One day, the actor Stenborg had played the part of "Gustavus Vasa" in the King's own play of that name so brilliantly, that the delighted author said to him after the end of the piece, "What does Gustavus Vasa desire of Gustavus III.?" "Alsida Rectory for his friend Ekelund," was the ready response, and Ekelund was appointed forthwith. It should be added, however, that the more conscientious of the King's counsellors, Creutz and Toll for instance, privately remonstrated against these evil practices, and finally Schröderheim was dismissed from office, though not from favour, and so the Swedish Church was purged of the crime of simony.

But it was neither among the really suffering peasantry nor yet among the righteously indignant clergy, but among the privileged and highly favoured nobility that the strength of the anti-royalist opposition lay. In 1772 the Nobility had thrown themselves into the arms of the King to escape the domination of the three lower Orders; but they very soon perceived that they had lost rather than gained by attaching themselves to the court. The King indeed multiplied offices and dignities for their special behoof, but he was not rich enough to convert the mass of the *jeunesse dorée* into a court aristocracy, and as soon as the gentry fairly grasped the fact that they had forfeited their ancient political influence, and gained absolutely nothing in return,

a reaction naturally set in. It now became the aim of the Nobility to recover as much as they could of what they had lost, which brought them into direct collision with the King, who was equally determined to surrender nothing. And indeed surrender on his part would have been absolutely ruinous to Sweden. With all his faults, personal and political, Gustavus III. was a born statesman and a true patriot. No other man in the kingdom was capable of carrying on the political reformation begun by the revolution of 1772. The Opposition had no alternative plan to offer, and no leader capable of even suggesting one. To discredit and destroy the existing system was their only aim, and they never looked beyond it. Persuaded that they could benefit personally by any change whatever, they cared not what that change might be or how they brought it about. In such views there was little patriotism and less wisdom, as the sequel will show.

A few days before the opening of the Riksdag, the King received the first intimation of the ominous temper of the deputies from Fersen himself in an interview which lasted from half-past eight till nearly midnight. If Fersen's own account of this interview be true, and we have no reason to doubt it, it would seem that he felt himself in a sufficiently commanding position to attempt to terrify the King into retreat or surrender. Throughout the interview he addressed his sovereign *de haut en bas*, and with a solemn impertinence which Gustavus must have found peculiarly irritating. The King received him with the most gracious courtesy, read aloud to him the propositions or Bills which he intended to lay before the Riksdag, and asked him whether he thought them acceptable. Upon this Fersen portentously craved permission to speak his mind freely, and having obtained it, declared that throughout an experience extending over forty years he had never known

the nation so unanimously discontented, distrustful, and exasperated. After this alarming preamble, he went on to recapitulate at some length the grievances of the separate Estates; then he criticised the royal propositions, and after metaphorically tearing them to pieces, blandly assured the astonished monarch that the Estates, in their present mood, would certainly refuse to even look at them. He concluded with a piece of insolence too characteristic to be omitted: "I humbly beg," said he, "that your Majesty will not take in ill part what I have said as to the present state of public opinion and the general want of confidence in your Majesty; but I assure you that so far does this feeling go, that if your Majesty were to declare Luther's Catechism to be the basis of Luther's doctrine, there are many who would at once begin to doubt it." The interview terminated by Gustavus thanking Fersen for his "*candour*."

On May 6, 1786, the Riksdag was "blown in."¹ The speech from the throne was, as usual, a masterpiece of simple, natural eloquence, rather resembling the language of a father to his children than of a sovereign to his subjects. It was not to demand fresh subsidies that he had called them together again. It was to consult them about their own welfare that he had assembled "a free, independent, and united people before the throne." Heaven had blessed his reign with a lasting peace, but the instability which always waits upon human prosperity had also made its influence felt here. The fruits of the earth, the source of all riches, had been denied them for three successive years, and this national calamity had added not a little to the burden of his crown. Yet they would see from the statements to be laid before them in the Secret

¹ To "blow in" and to "blow out" (*i.e.*, with trumpets) were the technical expressions for opening and closing the Riksdag.

Committee, that although man cannot control the shifting elements, yet human foresight may prevent their most grievous consequences. They would also see that while peace had been preserved and ancient alliances maintained, a new army, which made the nation respected, and a new navy, which protected her trade, were now the two pillars upon which the peace, honour, and safety of the realm securely rested.

On the following day Schröderheim read to the Estates a statement, the joint-composition of the King and himself, skilfully reviewing all that had been done during the last eight years ; and it may safely be affirmed that any Government which could now-a-days render only half so satisfactory an account of its stewardship would be pretty sure of a unanimous vote of confidence from the most captious and exacting of Parliaments. First the King glanced at the ecclesiastical administration, ignoring all the existing abuses and making the most of his recent reforms, for here also, though it was his vulnerable point, much useful work had been done. A new comprehensive hymn-book, the want of which had long been felt, was under the consideration of the Consistory, and a revision of the Scriptures had been undertaken by the learned Tingstadius ; scores of overgrown parishes had been subdivided, and no less than 174 churches had been rebuilt or restored. Next came the legal reforms, which had been carried out on broad, humanitarian principles. Capital punishment had been practically superseded by live-long imprisonment. It was no small relief to his burdens as a ruler, said the King, that he had seldom or never to sign a death-warrant. The infant children of convicts were in future to be educated at the expense of the State in rural asylums, instead of accompanying their parents to prison as heretofore. Finally, a committee of eminent jurists was engaged upon

a codification of the laws which would make legal process in future more expeditious and far less costly. Nor had the interests of trade, commerce, and agriculture been neglected. A canal had been opened between Lake Mälare and Central Sweden; convoys had been fitted out to protect Swedish merchantmen during the American war; a treaty of commerce, exceptionally advantageous to Sweden, had been concluded with the United States; the acquisition of the Island of St. Bartholomew, now declared a free port, had given her a footing in the West Indies; a more scientific system of exportation had quadrupled the proceeds of the mineral wealth of Sweden; in Finland, three new towns had been built, and 807 new homesteads occupied. The King thence proceeded to the consideration of the national defences, dwelling with especial pride and satisfaction on the state of the Navy; and his pride and satisfaction were indeed justifiable. To those acquainted with the very limited resources of Sweden, the resurrection of her navy must have seemed little short of miraculous. Since 1778, no less than eleven liners, ten frigates, seven sloops, two cutters, and a multitude of transport vessels had been fully equipped, while three more liners and three frigates would be ready by the end of the year; and all this had cost the Treasury not a farthing, the French subsidies had paid for everything. The new docks at Carlscrona, too, then the largest in the world, had also been completed, and Finland had been provided with a new and more efficient galley flotilla. The land defences also had not been neglected; the principal fortresses had been placed on a war-footing, the arsenals freshly stocked, the artillery and commissariat reorganised, and three large camps formed to promote military manœuvres on a large scale. Finally, the arts and sciences had been fostered by the re-endowment of the old Academy of Belles-Lettres, the foundation of the Swedish

Academy of Sciences, and the enlargement of the Academy of Fine Arts. The capital had been extended and beautified under the supervision of a prince who professed to be an architect himself, and who had already opened more new streets and built more public buildings than any of his predecessors.

Before the business of the session had fairly begun, the Opposition in the first Estate obtained from the King what was regarded at the time as a very important concession. Perceiving that they had large majorities in three out of the four Estates (the Estate of Burgesses was the only one of which they were not quite certain), they petitioned the King that in future all new Bills should require not the assent of all *four* Estates as heretofore, but the assent of only three out of four, and that whenever two Estates were divided against two on any measure, that measure was to be considered as lost. Now it was quite clear that the object of this petition was to get the control of the present Riksdag into their hands; yet, to the surprise and delight of the Nobility, Gustavus instantly granted their request, whereupon, in a sudden outburst of enthusiasm, an extraordinary deputation of forty-eight noblemen, headed by Count Brahe, the premier peer of Sweden, waited upon the King to express their gratitude for his gracious compliance with the wishes of his Nobility.

Shortly afterwards, the first and most important of the royal propositions or Bills, the so-called *passevolans* measure, was presented to the consideration of all four Estates.

We have already seen¹ that the organisation of the Swedish army was based upon Charles XI.'s Indelning System, the great object of which was to make it self-supporting. This system had been regarded by its founder as little short of perfect; but time had discovered its

¹ Chapter X.

defects, and it was these defects which the Government now proposed to remedy. Thus, for instance, nothing had been settled as to the transport of the regiments to and from camp, or as to their maintenance while there; but custom had established the obligation of the *rust* and *rote* holders¹ to convey the soldiers backwards and forwards, and provide them with money or provisions during the manœuvres. In hard times these obligations of conveyance and maintenance weighed very heavily upon the peasantry, and the Crown had, in the case of the Finnish regiments, commuted them in return for a small annual money payment, the so-called *passevolans*. The King now proposed to do the same with the Swedish regiments also.

This *passevolans* system was nearest of all to Gustavus's heart. It would place at his disposal an instantly mobile army, and such an army was indispensable for his ambitious purposes. He therefore spared no pains to win the Estates to his way of thinking beforehand. The Burgesses he was sure of already; the Clergy were speedily won by secret pledges of a reform of the whole ecclesiastical government in the future; but the opposition of the Nobility was the great rock ahead, and with the Nobility he felt it was useless to negotiate. He therefore tried intimidation. On the eve of the debate, he summoned Fersen to his box at the opera, and threatened him with all manner of pains and penalties unless he supported the measure in the Upper House; and on the day when the debate began, four senators in purple and ermine were sent to overawe the noble deputies by their august presence.

But the Upper House was neither to be overawed by Senators nor convinced by arguments. Fersen spoke dead against the *passevolans* measure, and although his fallacies were easily exposed by old General Siegroth, and the royal

¹ Chapter X.

proposition was brilliantly defended by Count Sparre, who spoke with all the authority of an acknowledged expert, and proved to demonstration that the proposed change would be a relief to the peasantry, a saving to the Exchequer, and double the efficiency of the army itself, the House rejected the Bill by 426 to 172. The Estate of Peasants followed the example of the Nobility, while the Clergy and Burgesses sided with the King. Thus the Estates being divided, two against two, the measure was lost. The significance of this rebuff was unmistakable. It was tantamount to a vote of want of confidence in the Government.

A still more bitter defeat awaited the Government on the question of supplies, which next came on for consideration.

The subsidies granted to the Crown by the last Riksdag had been for an indefinite period—they were to last from Riksdag to Riksdag. Gustavus desired the Estates to show him a similar complacency now; but, in their present contrary mood, the Estates were determined to show the King that they still held the power of the purse. So they would only grant him subsidies for four years; and, what is more, made a deduction from the usual amount of one per cent., in order, as Fersen puts it, to thereby encourage the public to hope for some more substantial relief from its present burdens, and, at the same time, to emphasise the right of the Estates to tax themselves. The Ministers warmly remonstrated against the one per cent. deduction as frivolous and vexatious—frivolous, because it gave the taxpayer no sensible relief; vexatious, because it would greatly aggravate the labours of the public auditors, and warned the Opposition against needlessly provoking an indulgent monarch. But their appeals and remonstrances were alike useless. In all four Estates the four

years' grant, with the one per cent. deduction, was voted by overwhelming majorities.

But now the burning question of the day, the distillery question, came before the Houses.

We have already seen¹ how the King, by Liljencrantz's advice, had made the distillation of spirits a Government monopoly, and how that monopoly, from which a golden harvest was expected, had ended in ruinous failure. The Government, in its disgust and embarrassment, was eager to get rid of the distilleries at almost any price; and the Parliamentary Committee appointed to report on the matter recommended an annual grant to the Crown of £140,000, on condition that the King not only surrendered his monopoly, but left the distillation of spirits absolutely free. To this Gustavus demurred. He was quite willing to surrender his monopoly, but he doubted the wisdom of allowing the peasant to convert his corn into alcohol at the very time when a total failure of the crops had raised all kinds of grain to famine prices. The Clergy and the Burgesses voted for the royal proposition pure and simple, but in the first Estate the Opposition was once more triumphant. Frietszky exclaimed against the injustice of depriving the peasantry of what he emphatically called "their primeval right of *ennobling* [*sic*] the products which they had wrung from the soil in the sweat of their brows." Fersen moved that the proposed grant of £140,000 should only be for eight years; but the Landmarshal declaring that his Majesty would accept no conditions, but desired the Nobility to simply answer Yes or No to his proposition, the House rejected the measure altogether.

But nowhere were the debates on the distillation question so vehement and interminable as in the fourth Estate. The interest of the three other Estates in the matter was

¹ Chapter X.

either very trivial or purely political ; but brandy was the one luxury of the Swedish peasant, and to distil it from his own corn for his own use was to him the most precious of privileges ; so, after many violent scenes, the fourth Estate finally agreed with the first Estate, and threw out the royal proposition by 141 to 16.

The rest of the royal propositions were dealt with in the same spirit. The aid which the King required for developing the mining industries of the Dales was refused on the ground that a loan for the purpose might embarrass the Bank of Sweden, notwithstanding that the Financial Committee had reported the condition of the Bank as most flourishing, attributing it entirely to his Majesty's circumspect foreign policy whereby the development of the carrying trade of Sweden during the American war had resulted in an unexpected and altogether unprecedented increase of the Bank's silver reserve.

The Estates would have liked to similarly deal with the last of the royal propositions, which required the loan of at least £80,000, free of interest, in five annual instalments, for the erection of public granaries to provide against the distress caused by the bad harvests. To have openly opposed so obviously useful and humane a measure would have been as much as their popularity was worth, especially after the King had reminded them that the credit upon the Bank which the last Riksdag had granted the Crown was still intact ; but they refused (again on the plea of anxiety for the solvency of the Bank) to grant a penny more than the minimum amount ; they distributed it over eight years instead of five, and they ungraciously stipulated that the Bank should now be considered to have completely fulfilled all its obligations to the Crown.

It was now evident to the King that he could do nothing with a Diet which, already troublesome, might at any

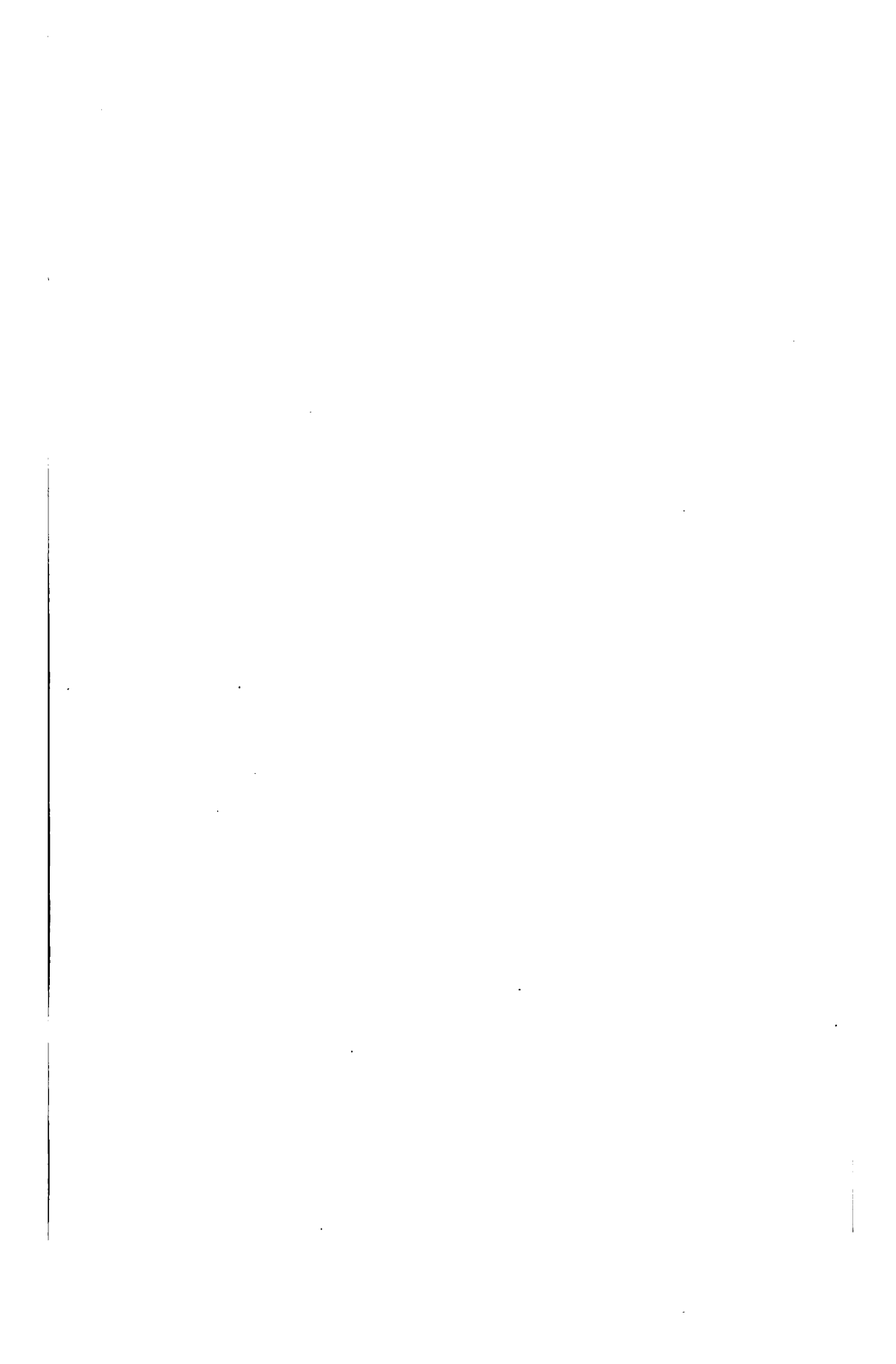
moment become dangerous, so he dissolved it after a two months' session. The short, half sorrowful, half reproachful speech in which he now addressed the deputies at the close of the Riksdag strangely contrasts with the joyful and sanguine tones in which he had welcomed them at its commencement.

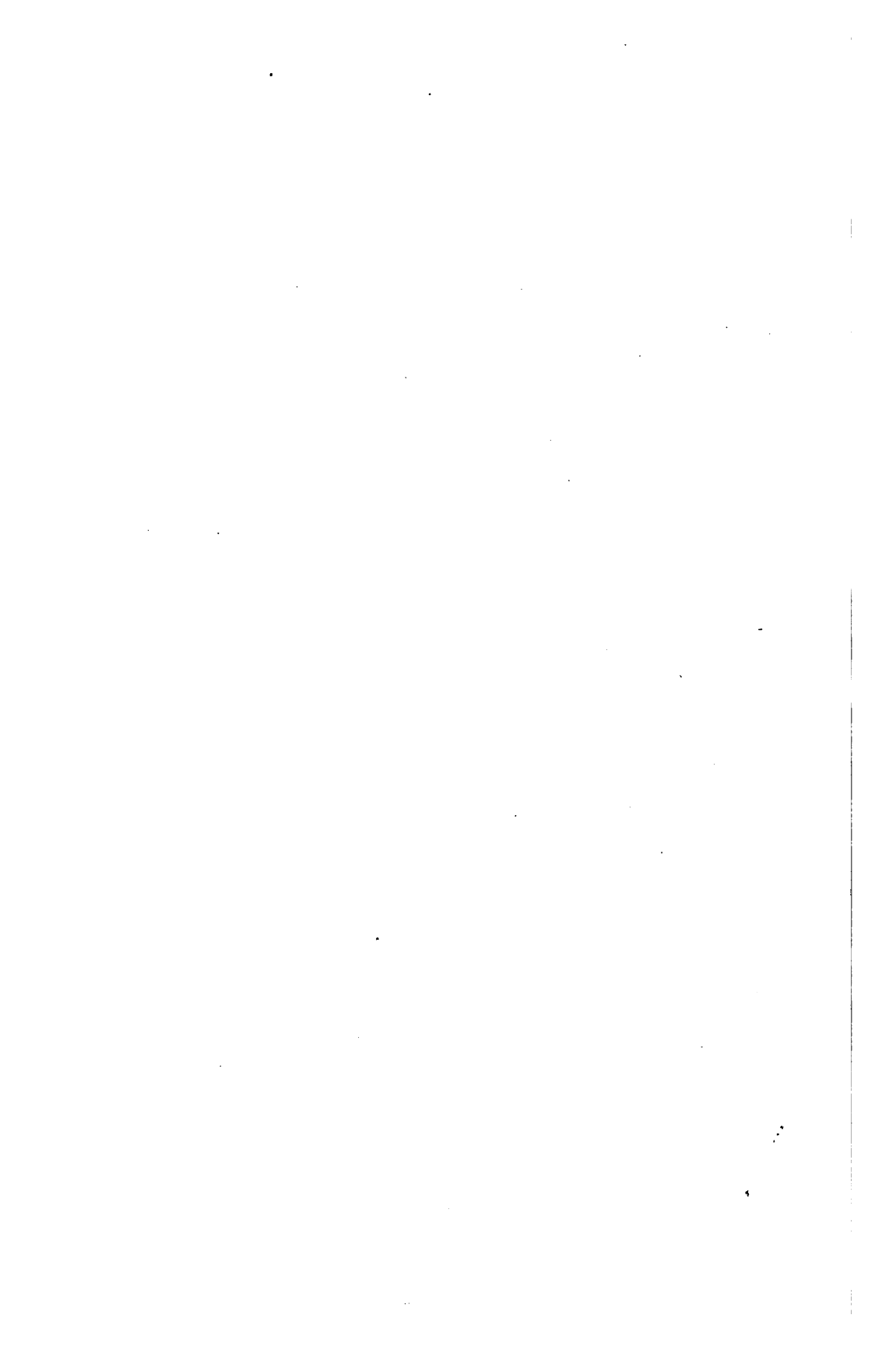
His conduct during the course of the present Riksdag, he said, ought to be a sufficient proof of his affection for his country. He regarded the unmerited apprehensions which had threatened to disturb that unity for which he had striven so hard during the last fourteen years as the clouds which always arise on the horizon after a long period of fine weather. Such clouds could only be dissipated by a steadfast patience, "for, in the long-run, the power of truth must always prevail, and will shine forth the more brightly the more men labour to obscure it." "And," continued the orator, "'tis to the judgment of posterity that kings must always appeal, for posterity alone is impartial. The blame or the praise of contemporaries is equally unjust, for they too often regard a good king as weak and a just king as severe. . . . Posterity discriminates more nicely, for its judgment is without envy and without malice." He was content, therefore, to leave it to posterity to judge betwixt him and them, and in the meanwhile his affection for the commonweal and the examples of his great ancestors would sustain him on a path too often strewn with thorns. As a fresh proof of his love for them, he would remit the fourth year of the subsidies they had granted him, for his subjects, depressed by hard times, sorely needed relief, and it was the joy of his heart to be able to contribute thereto. The present state of the kingdom promised a long repose, and, to all appearance, circumstances would not require their presence there again for some time. He, therefore, bade them a

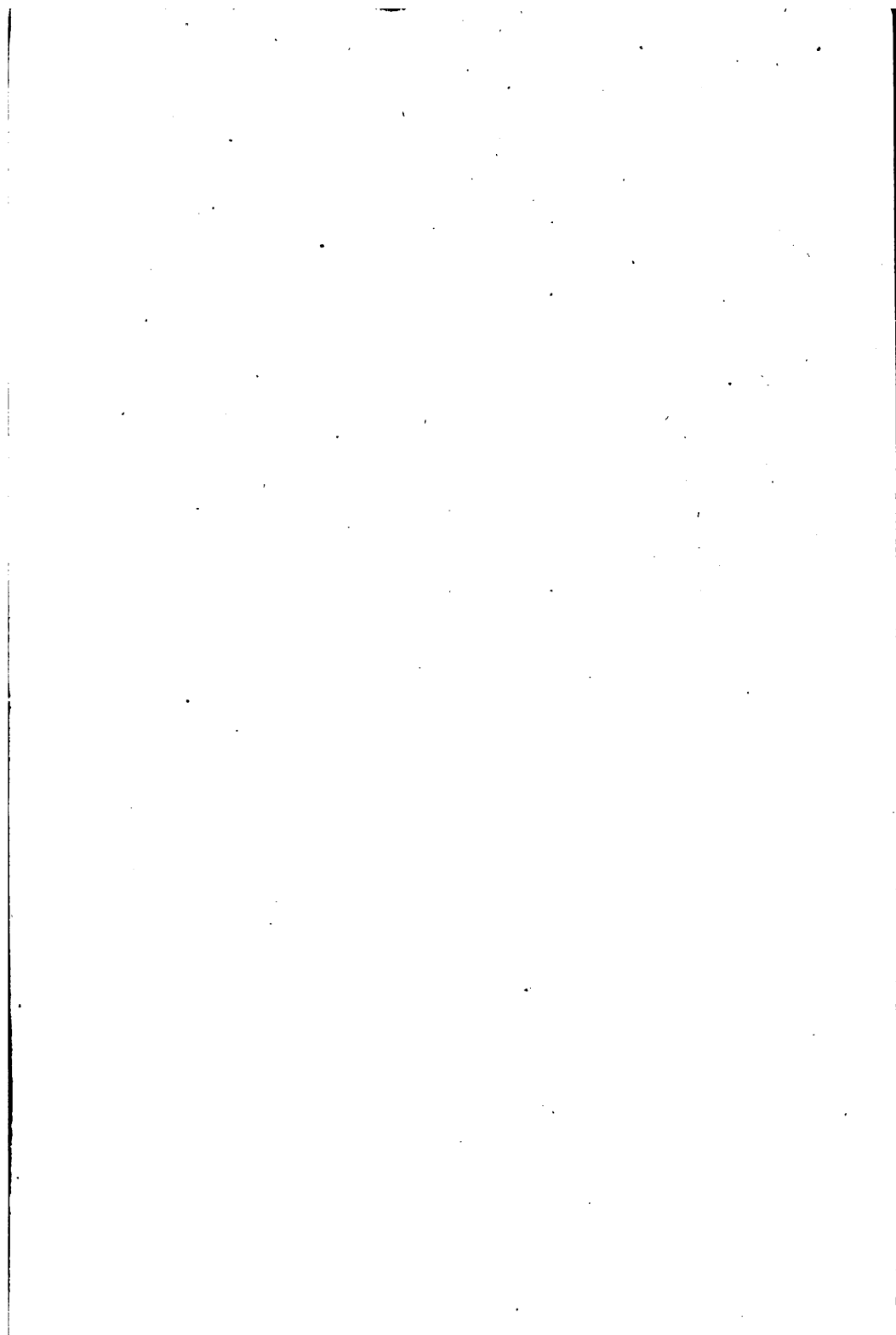
long farewell and committed them to the safe keeping of the Most High.

The Riksdag of 1786 was a severe blow to Gustavus's pride, ambition, and self-confidence. But his grief was not altogether selfish. He suffered even more as a man than as a king, for it was the apparent loss of his popularity which wounded him most of all. "Alas!" he cried to one of his private friends, "I no longer possess the hearts of my people." The remaining years of his life were to be few and evil, an alternation of terrible misfortunes and ruinous triumphs; yet the following anecdote shows that it was not those stormy times, but the apparently tranquil year 1786, which shook him most of all. During the subsequent Finnish war, after the unlucky retreat to Högfors, for which General Kaulbars was afterwards condemned to death by a court-martial, the poet Leopold, who was then residing in the royal camp at Lovisa, asked the King whether Kaulbars had ever ventured to appear before him after the retreat in question. "I saw him," replied the King, "on the other side of the river, but he seemed so indescribably wretched that I had not the heart to take him to task for it. I thought of my own state of mind in 1786."

END OF VOL. I.







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